



Class BT430

Book B77

Copyright N^o 1909

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT

Bransiet, Philippe, frère

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

PASSION

OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST

BY

BROTHER PHILIP

SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

Authorized English Version

LA SALLE BUREAU OF SUPPLIES
50 SECOND STREET, NEW YORK
1909

BT430

B77

1909

Nihil Obstat:

REMIGIUS LAFORT, S. T. L.,

Censor Librorum.

Oct. 19, 1909.

Imprimatur:

✠ JOANNES,

Archiepiscopus Neo-Eboracensis.

Oct. 22, 1909.

Copyright, 1909, Peter Muth.

©CLA259088

ms. Mar. 9, 1970

PREFACE

Meditation is the first of religious exercises; and the first of all subjects for meditation is the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of St. Francis de Sales, meditation always has for its object the love of God and the practice of virtue, and it is useful only in so far as it effectively leads thereto. How great, then, must be the profit to be derived from meditating on the sufferings and the death of Jesus? What can be better adapted to excite in our hearts the love of God and gratitude for his benefits? What can be more proper to maintain, develop, and strengthen the spirit of piety, courage in sacrifice, and a resolution to belong to God wholly and for ever?

m. g. Feb. 14, 32

Meditation on the Passion is an abundant source of most precious graces, a principle of that supernatural strength which renders the Christian patient and resigned in adversity, firm in combat with the enemies of salvation, and courageous in his war upon self.

All the saints have experienced this; and they teach with St. Bonaventure that "pious meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ delivers the Christian from all evil, draws down upon him all sorts of favors, procures for him the grace of God in this life, and becomes a pledge of immortal glory in the next." There is, therefore, reason to believe that we are doing great service to our Brothers in presenting them with a series of subjects for meditation on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Each subject comprises three parts: the *consideration*, or contemplation of the mystery; the *application*, or practical consequences that directly follow; and the *prayer*. We have chosen a sufficient number of subjects to allow not only one for each Friday of the year, but also some for the last two weeks of Lent; for during this time we are specially bound, according to the spirit of the Church, to meditate on the sufferings and death of our Lord.

In order that meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ may produce its fruits, it is requisite, besides disposing ourselves by careful preparation:—1, That we read the subject slowly and distinctly; 2, That we not only keep before us the greatness of him who suffers, but also that we ask for whom he suffers, what he suffers, and how he suffers; 3, That each one of us regards the Passion as having been suffered especially for himself, since the Savior would have done for even one man all that he has done for the whole human race.

The sentiments which are most in accord with the subjects on which we meditate, and to which, consequently, we have appealed most frequently, are admiration and love of our Lord, gratitude for his benefits and sorrow for our faults. There would seem to be less need of varying the affections than of exciting strongly such as are fundamental and as may lead us most effectually to the practice of virtue.

It has been our aim to keep to the subject under consideration, and to fix our eyes constantly on Jesus suffering or dying for us. The exhortations serve merely to point out the direct practical consequences suggested by the spirit of the mystery under consideration.

We have addressed ourselves to the heart rather than to the mind ; for it has seemed to us more advantageous to draw such pictures as would captivate the imagination than to present such arguments as satisfy the intellect. Such are the principles that have guided us in compiling this little work.

God grant that these meditations may be productive of good, that they may keep alive in our souls the spirit of prayer, and induce us to love our adorable Savior more and more ! Then we shall bless him for having inspired us to prepare them, and we shall rejoice at having contributed in some measure to make him known, loved, and glorified.

BROTHER PHILIP

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>First Meditation</i> —The Passion in General . .	1
<i>Second Meditation</i> —Jesus Goes from the Supper Room to the Garden of Olives	7
<i>Third Meditation</i> —Sadness of Jesus in the Gar- den of Olives	13
<i>Fourth Meditation</i> —Prayer of Jesus in the Gar- den of Olives	19
<i>Fifth Meditation</i> —Jesus Sweats Blood and Water	25
<i>Sixth Meditation</i> —The Sleep of the Apostles .	31
<i>Seventh Meditation</i> —Courage of Jesus after His Prayer	37
<i>Eighth Meditation</i> —The Kiss of Judas . . .	43
<i>Ninth Meditation</i> —Jesus Taken by the Jews . .	49
<i>Tenth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Brought to Jeru- salem	55
<i>Eleventh Meditation</i> —Jesus before Annas . .	61
<i>Twelfth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Brought to Caiphas	67
<i>Thirteenth Meditation</i> —Jesus before Caiphas .	73
<i>Fourteenth Meditation</i> —Jesus Receives a Blow .	79
<i>Fifteenth Meditation</i> —Jesus Accused by False Witnesses	85
<i>Sixteenth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Condemned at the Tribunal of Caiphas	91
<i>Seventeenth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Abused and Insulted in the House of Caiphas . . .	98
<i>Eighteenth Meditation</i> —St. Peter's Denial . .	104
<i>Nineteenth Meditation</i> —Conversion and Penance of St. Peter	110

	PAGE
<i>Twentieth Meditation</i> —Jesus Shut up in a Dungeon	116
<i>Twenty-first Meditation</i> —Jesus is Brought before Pilate	122
<i>Twenty-second Meditation</i> —Despair of Judas	128
<i>Twenty-third Meditation</i> —Causes of the Destruction of Judas	134
<i>Twenty-fourth Meditation</i> —Jesus before Pilate	140
<i>Twenty-fifth Meditation</i> —Jesus Interrogated as to His Royalty	146
<i>Twenty-sixth Meditation</i> —Silence of Jesus before Pilate	152
<i>Twenty-seventh Meditation</i> —Jesus Sent to Herod	158
<i>Twenty-eighth Meditation</i> —Jesus Sent Back by Herod to Pilate	164
<i>Twenty-ninth Meditation</i> —Jesus Placed on a Par with Barabbas	170
<i>Thirtieth Meditation</i> —The Scourging	177
<i>Thirty-first Meditation</i> —Jesus is Crowned with Thorns	183
<i>Thirty-second Meditation</i> —Jesus is Shown to the People	189
<i>Thirty-third Meditation</i> —The Jews Continue to Demand the Death of Jesus	195
<i>Thirty-fourth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Condemned to Death	201
<i>Thirty-fifth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Loaded with His Cross	207
<i>Thirty-sixth Meditation</i> —Jesus Carries His Cross	213
<i>Thirty-seventh Meditation</i> —Jesus Falls under the Weight of His Cross	219

	PAGE
<i>Thirty-eighth Meditation</i> —Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother	225
<i>Thirty-ninth Meditation</i> —Simon of Cyrene Assists Jesus to Carry His Cross	231
<i>Fortieth Meditation</i> —A Pious Woman Wipes the Face of Jesus	237
<i>Forty-first Meditation</i> —Jesus Consols the Holy Women	243
<i>Forty-second Meditation</i> —Jesus Stripped of His Garments	249
<i>Forty-third Meditation</i> —The Crucifixion . .	255
<i>Forty-fourth Meditation</i> —Jesus Raised on the Cross	261
<i>Forty-fifth Meditation</i> —Jesus on the Cross . .	267
<i>Forty-sixth Meditation</i> —Jesus Prays for His Enemies	273
<i>Forty-seventh Meditation</i> —Jesus Promises Heaven to the Good Thief	279
<i>Forty-eighth Meditation</i> —Jesus Gives Us Mary for Our Mother	285
<i>Forty-ninth Meditation</i> —Abandonment of Jesus on the Cross	291
<i>Fiftieth Meditation</i> —Jesus Suffering Thirst . .	297
<i>Fifty-first Meditation</i> —Jesus Says: "All is Consummated"	303
<i>Fifty-second Meditation</i> —Jesus Commends His Soul to His Father	309
<i>Fifty-third Meditation</i> —Jesus Dies on the Cross	315
<i>Fifty-fourth Meditation</i> —The Body of Jesus Pierced by the Spear	321
<i>Fifty-fifth Meditation</i> —The Five Wounds . .	327

	PAGE
<i>Fifty-sixth Meditation</i> —Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross	333
<i>Fifty-seventh Meditation</i> —Jesus is Laid in the Tomb	339
<i>Fifty-eighth Meditation</i> —The Sepulchre of Jesus Christ	345
<i>Fifty-ninth Meditation</i> —The Resurrection of Jesus Christ	351
<i>Sixtieth Meditation</i> —Good Friday	357
<i>Sixty-first Meditation</i> —Holy Saturday	363
<i>Sixty-second Meditation</i> —May 3—Finding of the Holy Cross	369
<i>Sixty-third Meditation</i> —First Sunday of July— The Precious Blood	375
<i>Sixty-fourth Meditation</i> —September 14—Exal- tation of the Holy Cross	382

MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

FIRST MEDITATION

THE PASSION IN GENERAL

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man.—Luke xviii. 31.

CONSIDERATION

In imitation of all the saints, let us make it our principal occupation to meditate upon the passion of Jesus Christ. Our divine Savior wishes it, the Church exhorts us to it in a thousand ways;—moreover, this exercise is productive of abundant grace.

Jesus Christ invites all men to nourish their minds and hearts with the memory of his passion. Even before his coming, he would have it prefigured and foretold, that all men subject to the Old Law might contemplate the future august sacrifice by which they were to be redeemed, and of which all other sacrifices were but prophetic symbols.

He himself announced to his apostles and to all the Jewish people, that he was to suffer: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be

lifted up.”¹ “He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation.”² “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death.”³

He wishes us to remember him, and his sufferings, and he manifests this desire to us through his Church. What does our loving Mother leave undone to remind us of the sorrow and ignominy that he endured for us! She celebrates unceasingly the sacrifice of the altar, which is the continuation of that of Calvary; she makes the sign of the cross the distinctive mark of her children; she keeps before their eyes the image of Christ crucified, and wishes it to be honored in every dwelling. By her saints, her devotions, and her ministers, she speaks to us incessantly of the sorrows of her divine Spouse.

Let us strive to realize her intentions. Should not we religious above all others meditate on the Savior’s passion? Every thing in the life which we have embraced, speaks to us of Jesus suffering: we have the crucifix constantly before our eyes; we have in our hands and carry about with us the sacred book which contains the narrative of his sorrows.

Let us, then, reflect on this subject which is so supremely important and so rich in fruits of salvation; and taking a general view of the passion, let us ask ourselves who it is that suffers, why he suffers, and from whom he suffers.

He who suffers is the Incarnate Word of God. What

¹John iii. 14.

²Luke xvii. 25.

³Luke xviii. 31-33.

a mystery! How can we recall it without being filled with astonishment and penetrated with awe? The Eternal, the King of heaven, descends to the very abyss of annihilation; he whom the angels adore, is the butt of mockery and derision; the Holy of holies, the Author of life, endures every suffering, even death itself; the Incarnate Lord acts as our substitute, takes the chalice of divine justice, and drinks it to the dregs. O how bitter is that chalice of woe which he drinks to satisfy for our sins! In his soul he suffers sadness, fear, weariness, grief, desolation, dejection, shame, confusion, and all manner of anguish.

In his body he suffers unheard-of pains. He is tightly bound; he is brutally dragged along; he is slapped and buffeted; he is cruelly scourged; he is crowned with thorns; he is burdened with the cross, then nailed to it, and after it is elevated he endures upon it three hours of mortal agony.

He suffers from all sorts of persons: his people disown him and demand his death; one of his apostles betrays him, another denies him, all desert him. For him, there is no pity, no compassion. Earth and hell are leagued against him. Heaven seems to abandon him, for he cries out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹ It is, therefore, overwhelmed with pain and steeped in sorrow that he presents himself for our contemplation.

If now we ask why he suffers so many ills, let us seek the reason in his divine heart which beats only with zeal for his Father's glory and with love for sinful men.

¹Matt. xxvii. 46.

He suffers to glorify his heavenly Father and accomplish his holy will. "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; then said I: 'Behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will.'"¹ When about to give himself to his enemies, he says to his apostles: "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go hence."²

He suffers in order to satisfy for the sins of all men: He "hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God, for an odor of sweetness."³ In him, "we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins."⁴ And David had said, "With the Lord there is mercy; and with him plentiful redemption: and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."⁵

Jesus Christ suffers that we may love him in return with all the love of which we are capable; and it is for this reason that, even though one tear of his would have been sufficient to wash away all the sins of men, he was pleased to endure all sorts of pain and to die a most cruel death.

He suffers to cure men of the wounds made by sin, and to restore them to their former state. Our fall was caused by pride and disobedience; our restoration can be effected only by voluntary abasement and entire submission to God. It is for this reason that our Lord so humbles himself that he can say: "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people:"⁶ and that after assuming the form of a slave,

¹Ps. xxxix. 7-9.

²John xiv. 31.

³Eph. v. 2.

⁴Col. i. 14.

⁵Ps. cxxix. 7, 8.

⁶Ps. xxi. 7.

“he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”¹

He suffers to teach us patience, forgiveness of injuries, and devotedness even to our enemies; he suffers to give us a perfect example of all virtues, and to encourage us to walk in his footsteps; he suffers to make us understand the great evil of sin, the cost of grace, and the value of our souls.

APPLICATION

Is it with our whole heart that we love Jesus, the divine victim of our redemption? He appears before us bruised, crowned with thorns, covered with blood, blinded with tears, fastened to a cross; and, in this state, he says to us: “My son, give me thy heart!”² Can we refuse it to him?

With the saints, let us compassionate his sufferings; let us share his pain; let us weep over his affliction; but, at the same time, let us, as he exhorts us to do, grieve for our sins, which are the true cause of his passion.

Let us gather the fruits of salvation which he has procured for us by his sacrifice; let us apply his infinite merits to ourselves. Let this be our whole ambition. The graces that flow from the cross, purify, console, and strengthen the soul, and prepare it to celebrate in heaven the eternal nuptials of the Lamb, that has been slain for us.

PRAYER

O Jesus, who hast endured so much for the love of us, deign, I beseech thee, to enlighten my mind and touch

¹Philip. ii. 8.

²Prov. xxiii. 26.

my heart, that, as I contemplate thy sufferings, I may comprehend, with all thy saints, the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of thy charity, and that my soul may pour forth itself in tears of love, gratitude, and repentance!

O Victim of my salvation, grant that after sharing in thy sufferings here, I may be united with thee hereafter in thy glory. Amen.

Résumé, page 382.

Let us piously meditate on the Savior's passion. Let us ask ourselves:

1. Who is it that suffers?
2. What does he suffer in his body?
3. What does he suffer in his soul?
4. From what does he suffer?
5. Why does he suffer?

—Let each one of these considerations convince us that we should:

1. Love Jesus Christ, who became a victim for us.
2. Hate sin, the true cause of his immolation.
3. Compassionate his sufferings for us.
4. Bless him for his infinite generosity.
5. Labor to apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice.

SECOND MEDITATION

JESUS GOES FROM THE SUPPER ROOM TO THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron.

—John xviii. 1.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our adorable Savior after he has celebrated the Last Supper with his apostles. He has immolated and eaten with them the last figurative paschal lamb; he has established the sacrifice of the altar; he has presented to them the consecrated bread and wine, saying: "This is my body, which shall be delivered for you:"¹ "This is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many."² And now the hour has come when the true paschal lamb is to be immolated; when the sacrifice of the cross, which that of the altar shall commemorate and continue, is to be accomplished; when that adorable body which is the victim of our salvation is to be offered up, and that divine blood is to be shed, by which alone the remission of sins can be obtained.

This is the night on which Jesus Christ is to give full liberty to the powers of darkness. His enemies are on the watch and are eager to seize him; the infamous Judas is with them, awaiting a favorable moment for betraying his divine Master.

¹1 Cor. xi. 24.

²Matt. xxvi. 28.

But let us turn our eyes away from the traitor. Let us behold the eleven faithful apostles, who are filled with the deepest emotion after partaking of the supper of the New Law, and who press round their divine Master, listening with respect, love, and piety, to the words of life and charity that fall from his lips.

What is written, he tells them, must be fulfilled in me: "He . . . was reputed with the wicked;"¹ for what concerns me relates to its accomplishment. "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In my Father's house there are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and will take you to myself; that where I am you also may be. . . .

"If you love me, keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, . . . the Spirit of truth. . . . I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. . . . The world seeth me no more; but you see me. . . .

"My peace I give to you. . . . I go away, and I come again to you. . . . For the prince of this world cometh; and in me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go hence."²

After these words, he journeys to the brook Cedron, which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. On the way, he continues to instruct his apostles: "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do the things that I command you.

¹Isai. liii. 12.

²John xiv.

. . . These things I command you, that you love one another.”¹

He tells them again that he is going to leave them, but that he will send them the Comforter to teach them all truth. He exhorts them to pray, assuring them that whatsoever they ask in his name, his Father will give them. He warns them that they will have much to suffer in the world: “But have confidence,” he adds, “I have overcome the world.”² Then raising his eyes to heaven, he prays for them and for all those who shall believe in their word: “Father, I pray for them. Keep them in thy name. . . . that they may be one as we also are. . . . Preserve them from evil. . . . Sanctify them in truth. . . . Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me; that they may see my glory which thou hast given me. . . . I have made known thy name to them, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”³

His prayer finished, he goes forth from Jerusalem, and by that very act begins to execute the decree of reprobation pronounced against that ungrateful city, so soon to be guilty of deicide. For Jerusalem has failed to profit by the days that might have procured peace, and now these days of mercy are no more.

Jesus arrives at the Valley of Josaphat. As pre-figured by David fleeing from the parricide Absalom, he crosses the torrent of Cedron, his soul overwhelmed with sadness at the ingratitude of men. As we contemplate him in his dejection and desolation, let us remem-

¹John xv.

²John xvi. 33.

³John xvii.

ber that he will come again in power and glory to that same valley, where all men shall be gathered before him for judgment.

Jesus now approaches the garden in which he is to begin his passion. But as he is to sustain the contest alone, he first withdraws from eight of his apostles, and then from the three remaining. O how keenly he feels this separation! and with what emotion his disciples behold him going away from them, entering the garden, and disappearing among the trees!

The journey from the supper-room to the Garden of Olives is at last ended. Jesus is about to commence his passion on the very mountain from which he is afterward to ascend into heaven. He would thereby teach us that it is through trials and tribulations that we are to gain eternal bliss; that like him, we must enter the garden of sorrow and ascend the heights of Calvary before we can arrive at the glory of the Ascension.

Jesus is about to commence his passion in a garden. By this circumstance, he tells us that he has come to repair the evil which began in another garden with the disobedience of the first man, that he is about to disarm the cherub placed by divine justice at the gate of the true paradise, and to seize the flaming sword which bars our entrance. Let us reflect on the difference between the garden wherein the first man was placed, and that which the New Man has entered.

There Adam enjoyed all sorts of delight; here Jesus is going to suffer all manner of anguish of soul. There the first sin was committed, and thence innumerable evils overspread the earth; here sin is to be repaired,

and hence will flow such grace that the Church can exclaim: "O happy transgression which procured for us such a Redeemer!" There Death was born of pride and pleasure; here Jesus by his sufferings and humiliation is to bring us forth to a new life. There stood the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the origin of all wars and disorders; here is seen the olive, the symbol of that peace which Jesus has purchased for us by his sweat and blood.

APPLICATION

How fruitful in salutary teachings is not the subject on which we are meditating! It helps us to understand the misfortune of a soul which, like Judas, is the slave of passion, and withdraws from its divine Master; or which, like Jerusalem, knows not the day when our adorable Savior visits it with his grace! It admirably instructs us in the love, the tenderness, and the generosity of Jesus Christ for us. It enables us to see his very heart consumed with the flames of charity.

O that we could but conceive the love of our divine Savior, who, after having given himself to us in the sacrament of the altar, becomes our substitute to suffer the penalty of our sins!

He has said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹ This proof he has given us, and that too when we were his enemies. Why, then, should we not love him with our whole heart? Why not manifest to him, by all our thoughts, works, and affections, the liveliest and most

¹John xv. 13.

constant gratitude; since our gratitude, how great soever it may be, will never be commensurate with his benefits?

PRAYER

I adore thee, O Jesus, beginning thy dolorous passion. I have accompanied thee from the supper-room to the Mount of Olives, and have listened, with thy apostles, to the words of life and charity which proceed from thy adorable lips. Grant by thy grace that they may become a rule of conduct for me, so that, after faithfully accomplishing thy holy will in this life, I may deserve to be placed at thy right hand, when thou shalt come, glorious and triumphant, to judge the nations in the same Valley of Josaphat which witnessed thy humiliations.

Résumé, page 382.

The hour approaches in which Jesus Christ is to be delivered to his enemies.

1. He tells the apostles that he is about to leave them.
2. He consoles them, promising them not to leave them orphans, but to send them the Holy Ghost.
3. He exhorts them to love one another.
4. He prays for them to his heavenly Father.
5. He crosses the valley of Josaphat . . . arrives at the garden of Gethsemane. . . . withdraws from his apostles . . . and goes forth alone to pray. . . .

—Let us learn from these circumstances:

1. How unhappy is the soul from which Jesus departs.
2. How tenderly our divine Savior loves us.
3. What affection we ought to have for him.
4. How great he is, since in that very valley of Josaphat one day he shall judge the world.
5. How grateful we ought to be to the second Adam who has repaired the fault committed by the first.

THIRD MEDITATION

SADNESS OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

My soul is sorrowful even unto death.—Matt. xxvi. 38.

CONSIDERATION

Let us adore our divine Savior entering into the Garden of Olives with Peter, James, and John—the three disciples whom he wishes to make the special witnesses of the piteous state to which he is reduced. The fear, sadness, and tribulation which he experiences, he expresses in these words: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.”¹ Wishing to prepare for his passion by prayer, he tells the disciples who accompany him to watch and pray; and then withdraws some paces from them.

Let us contemplate him in the state in which the holy Evangelist describes him: he is overcome with fear and anguish; he suffers the greatest interior pains, the most overwhelming sadness, and the most fearful anxiety; he feels in his heart the incomprehensible sorrows whereof the royal prophet spoke when he exclaimed by divine inspiration: “My heart is troubled within me; . . . and darkness hath covered me.”²

See, O my soul! thy divine Savior sinking under the weight of his sorrows; he is pale, weak, and trembling; his heart is oppressed with anguish, his eyes are filled

¹Matt. xxvi. 38.

²Ps. liv. 5, 6.

with tears, his soul is plunged in the bitterest grief. Hear the groans of thy Beloved, and abandon thyself to sentiments of the liveliest compassion.

O Jesus, how profound is thy sorrow! and yet how mysterious, how astounding it is! But a few moments ago, in thy desire to suffer and die for us, thou didst say: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"¹ And behold all at once thou showest thyself timid, dismayed, and overcome with weariness, and revealest to us that thy soul is sorrowful even unto death. Why, then, O Lord! art thou, the joy and the delight of the angels, engulfed in affliction? Wherefore dost thou, the source of all strength, appear weakness itself? Wherefore dost thou, who art to be the courage of martyrs, shudder at the sight of torments and the approach of death? Undoubtedly in all this there are sublime teachings, whereon we should meditate attentively.

The exhaustion that Jesus feels is extreme; but it is, at the same time, voluntary. He produces it in his soul, to show us that he has truly taken our nature, and that, apart from sin, he is really subject to the same weakness as we are. He wills only what his Father wills: nevertheless, his submission, though perfect, does not diminish his feeling of horror and repugnance for the torments and ignominious death which he is to undergo. At this moment, the divinity, which always dwells in his adorable person, leaves his sacred humanity, in some degree, to itself, in order that he may experience all our sorrows; but at the same time it sustains it, that it may not give way before the moment that he has him-

¹Luke xii. 50.

self appointed. More than that, as St. Lawrence Justinian remarks, his very divinity contributes to augment his sufferings, by giving his soul a perfect knowledge of all that he has to endure.

This is, indeed, the first cause of his utter prostration. He considers the bitterness of the chalice presented to him by the justice of God, which he must satisfy for us. He sees distinctly all that he is to suffer; he pictures in imagination all the ignominy that awaits him, all the horrible torments that are prepared for him. He foresees that every moment of that night and of the following day, will bring him some new opprobrium; that he will become the butt of all manner of insult, be outraged in every possible way, be left a prey to the most cruel tortures, and this even to the very moment when he shall expire, saying, "It is consummated!"¹ His heart quails before the sight, his courage seems to abandon him, and his soul is overcome with mortal fear.

But it is not only the sight of the torments prepared for him that affects our divine Savior; it is still more that of the sins which he has taken upon himself, and of the vast number of souls who will fail to profit by his sacrifice.

He is overwhelmed with sorrow, because he sees himself laden before his Father, with the sins of all men. Oh! who will give us to know the shame and confusion that he feels when he considers himself in that state? He who is the thrice holy God, appears guilty of all the sins that have been committed or shall be committed on earth during the lapse of ages! Hence, at this moment, nothing is present to his mind but what is sad and pain-

¹John xix. 30.

ful. He sees in the past an unbroken succession of crimes, from the disobedience of Adam to the sacrilege of Judas. The present bears heavily on his soul, and its weight is increased by the still greater crimes already resolved on by the chiefs of the Jewish nation. He perceives in the future the work of sin going on without interruption, and that despite the sacrifice of his life offered to destroy it.

He is overwhelmed with sadness, because he beholds the ingratitude and the misfortune of sinners who will refuse to profit by his sufferings and his death; who will despise the salvation which he has purchased for them; and who persisting in their iniquity will die impenitent. It is over them and their unhappy lot, that he sheds abundant tears. His heart is broken to think of how many Christians, members of his mystical body, shall be snatched away by demons!

But there are also other motives which cause this interior sorrow of Jesus: "It is," says St. Ambrose, "to expiate our guilty joys, and merit for us the grace never again to give ourselves up to them." It is to sanctify our sorrows, to give us strength and courage to bear them, to lessen their bitterness and even sometimes to exempt us from them. It is that we may find in him a remedy for our moral pains, a source of consolation in our dryness and discouragement. It is also in order to inspire us with the sorrow which we ought to have for our transgressions. Sin originates in the heart; Jesus begins to expiate it by an interior sorrow, and thereby merits for us all sorrow for the faults which we have committed, and grace to atone for them by a true repentance.

APPLICATION

To enter into the spirit of the sorrow of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, let us excite our hearts to the liveliest gratitude to him, and the most sincere repentance for our faults. Let us never forget that our sins overwhelmed his soul with grief, covered his face with confusion, and filled his eyes with tears. Let us, then, weep in his presence over our misfortune in offending him, and let our tears have their source in a truly contrite and humble heart.

Let the thought of the sorrow of Jesus excite us to patience and resignation in our interior troubles, and strengthen us against weariness and discouragement. When we are in affliction, let us unite ourselves to Jesus suffering, and ask him, by the merits of his divine sadness, for grace to bear with constancy and generosity the trials to which he subjects us.

Let us purify our hearts from all irregular affection; let us remodel our interior after the pattern set us by him. Let us try to share the sadness of our divine Master, not allowing ourselves to give way to a joy that is wholly worldly, but living in such modesty and reserve as may manifest the compunction that reigns in our hearts.

PRAYER

“O Lord Jesus Christ, eternal sweetness of those who love thee, remember the bitter sadness which thou didst feel at the approach of thy passion, and by that sadness, O most sweet Jesus, have mercy, I beseech thee, on me a sinner!” Grant that I may weep to my last hour over

my misfortune in offending thee, and by the generous practice of virtue, atone for my unfaithfulness, which I will deplore to the end of my life.

Résumé, page 383.

As the prophets had foretold, Jesus is overwhelmed with sadness.

Let us contemplate him :

1. Pale, weak, a prey to inexpressible anguish.
2. Suffering the greatest interior pains.
3. Raising his tearful eyes to heaven.
4. Telling the apostles who are with him : "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."
5. Going aside to pray.

Let us compassionate his sorrow, and reflect that it is caused by

1. The bitter chalice of his passion.
2. The sins with which he is burdened.
3. The divine wrath whose full weight he, though innocent, is about to bear alone.
4. The number of souls, alas ! so great, who will fail to profit by his death.
5. Our guilty joys, which he expiates, our little contrition for our faults.

FOURTH MEDITATION

PRAYER OF JÉSUS IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

Father, . . . remove this chalice from me.—Mark xiv. 36.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our adorable Savior in the Garden of Olives, suffering in his soul the most overwhelming weariness, the most lively apprehension, and the most profound sadness. Who can measure the extent of his grief? Let us listen to him as he manifests it to his apostles in the astonishing words: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."¹ His heart is desolate, and he feels the need of recourse to his heavenly Father, to draw therefrom strength against the exhaustion into which he allows his sacred humanity to fall. After having admonished the three apostles who accompany him, to watch and pray with him, he goes a stone's throw from them, and there, falling prostrate on the ground, he says: "Father, all things are possible to thee; take away this chalice from me; but not what I will, but what thou wilt."²

Who, then, is it that is reduced to this state of desolation and prays with such earnest entreaty? It is the Almighty, the well-beloved son of God. What a mystery, then, is revealed by this agonizing grief, and the sighs and moans in which he gives vent to it!

¹Mark xiv. 34.

²*Ibid.* 36.

He considers himself as charged with the sins of all men, and consequently as indebted to his Father's justice for the all but infinite number of their faults and crimes. Hence the chalice which he asks to have taken away, is the chalice of our sins, which, through love for us, he wishes to drink, although it is infinitely repugnant to his sanctity.

It contains all that he is to suffer in his grievous passion: the afflictions that will break over him, and end only with his cruel and ignominious death. It contains the profanation, by his enemies, of his adorable person, which they will overwhelm with all manner of contempt; and the deicide of the Jews, which will draw down upon them numberless misfortunes and the ruin of their nation.

It contains also the abuse of those graces which he is about to merit for men at the cost of so many sorrows; and the loss of all those souls who will cast themselves into the abyss of hell, notwithstanding what he is doing to save them.

All this is present to his mind and breaks his heart. Hence he asks by "prayers and supplications, with a strong cry and tears,"¹ that this chalice be taken away. It were indeed just, O Jesus, that thy Father should hear thy prayer. Thou art holiness itself, and thou shouldst not be subject to sorrow and death, which are the penalty of sin; thy sacred humanity should neither suffer nor die. But if he hear thee, if thy chalice be removed, what is to become of us, who can be saved only on condition that thou accept it; for thou alone canst be the victim of our redemption?

¹Heb. v. 7.

But let us have confidence: mercy prevails over justice. Jesus desires to be now and always our generous Redeemer; for after crying out, "Father, take away this chalice from me," he immediately adds: "but not as I will, but as thou wilt." Let us reflect on this second part of his prayer.

"Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Thus Jesus commences his passion by the self-denial which he had laid down as a precept when he said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me!"¹ He gives up his human will, although it is most holy, and compels it to accept innumerable torments and an infamous death from which it would naturally have shrunk.

"Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt:" I submit to thy decrees. "Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, 'Behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will.'"² Yes, O Father, to repair the disobedience of man, I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; I accept the chalice which thou dost present to me; I consent to be baptized with the baptism where-with I am to be baptized; may thy holy will, not mine, be done!

O sublime obedience of Jesus! By it he adores God in a manner worthy of his majesty; by it he repairs the disobedience of Adam and of each one of us; by it he merits for us the grace on all occasions to submit our own will to the divine will, and to lead, in our holy state, the life of obedience to which we are called.

Thus it is that, in his prayer, our divine Savior reveals

¹Matt. xvi. 24.

²Ps. xxxix. 7-9.

to us the admirable dispositions of his heart, and teaches us both the renunciation of our own will and perfect submission to the will of God. He teaches us by example the qualities which our prayers ought to have; for he prays with humility, annihilating himself, as it were, in the presence of his Father; he prays with fervor, asking earnestly to be exempted from the sufferings of his passion; with resignation, asking with perfect submission to the will of God; with constancy, repeating the same words and prolonging his prayer, although he is in such extreme desolation of soul that he appears to have been forsaken by God the Father.

APPLICATION

Let us compassionate the interior sorrow of Jesus; let us share the grief that overwhelms him, and with him shed tears before God the Father. His sorrow is caused by sin; and we, alas! have committed it so many times, and under such aggravating circumstances! Besides, we see it committed so frequently, so universally. Why do we not feel a bitter pain, a profound desolation at the sight?

With Jesus, let us weep over the misfortune of those souls who do not profit by the redemption which he has purchased for them by his sufferings and death. O how deplorable is their state! Let us pray that the number of these souls may diminish; let us pray for the conversion of sinners; let us pray that the merits of our divine Redeemer may not become unfruitful through the malice or the indifference of men.

In imitation of our divine Master, let us renounce our

own will to submit in all things to that of God. Let us always be heartily disposed to say: "Our Father who art in heaven! thy holy will be done by me on earth, as it is done by the angels in heaven; nay, rather by thy divine Son who, to accomplish it, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Let us ask of Jesus Christ praying in the Garden of Olives, the spirit of prayer and the courage to drink of the chalice which is presented to us. Thus we shall apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice.

PRAAYER

O most sweet Jesus, who hast come to seek and to save what was lost, I compassionate, from the depths of my heart, the desolation to which thou art reduced. O Beloved of my soul! I wish to give myself entirely to thee; and in order to testify to thee my love and gratitude, I offer thee my heart to suffer as much of the bitterness of thine as thou wilt deem fitting.

Deign, I beseech thee, to aid me by thy grace, lest I fail in courage, for alas! I am weakness itself; and at sight of obstacles, I can only exclaim: "Father, take this chalice away from me." Grant, therefore, I beseech thee, that in all my trials I may be able to add, after thy example, "Father, not my will but thine be done."

Résumé, page 383.

Let us contemplate Jesus Christ overwhelmed with sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane.

1. He is alone at some distance from his disciples.
2. He casts himself prone upon the earth.

3. "Father," he cries, "all things are possible to thee."

4. "Remove this chalice from me."

5. "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

—Let us enter into the spirit of this mystery.

Let us ask ourselves who it is that prays thus, what this chalice is which he asks to have taken away from him; and let us understand how much we should,

1. Compassionate his sorrow.

2. Fear, deplore, and hate sin, which is its true cause.

3. Mourn over the misfortune of those souls who fail to profit by the redemption which Jesus has purchased.

4. Renounce our will after the example of our adorable Master.

5. In all things submit to the will of God.

FIFTH MEDITATION

JESUS SWEATS BLOOD AND WATER

Being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.—
Luke xxii. 43, 44.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior prolonging his prayer in the Garden of Olives, notwithstanding the fact that he is overwhelmed with grief; and let us recall the principal causes of his desolation of soul.

He views the sufferings that await him. He sees the chains that shall bind his hands, the lashes that shall tear his members, the thorns that shall pierce his head; the nails, the cross, the spear,—all the instruments of his torture. He sees how deep a wound his sufferings shall inflict on the heart of his most holy Mother. He counts all the woes wherewith Jerusalem shall be overwhelmed in punishment of the deicide of which she is soon to be guilty. Having taken our iniquities upon himself, he sees himself, as it were, defiled with the crimes of all mankind. What a subject of confusion for his most holy soul, which comprehends perfectly how hideous, how hateful, and how revolting sin is!

“O men! who know not what injury sin does to God,” exclaims St. Chrysostom, “come, hasten to behold Christ, the anointed of the Lord, the Son of God, God himself, prostrate in the dust. What is it that has

reduced him to this state?—Sin, nay, even the mere image of sin. . . . For he has seen how much sin offends God and degrades man; and how necessary it was for him to make satisfaction in order to appease the one and reinstate the other.”

St. Paul says: “Him who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in him!”¹ Our adorable Savior shudders as he beholds all the rigor of that divine justice which has been provoked by the iniquities of men, and which is to be fully exercised on him as the substitute of sinners.

Above all, he considers the number, alas! so great, of those who will trample on his blood, and who will draw from his sufferings and death nothing but a terrible condemnation. O how his divine heart is afflicted at the sight of these wretches! How urgently he beseeches his Father to remove this chalice from him; to grant, if possible, that all men may profit by the redemption that he is going to effect! “The Son of God, when about to begin his passion,” says St. Catharine of Sienna, “seeing impenitent sinners deprived through their own malice of the fruit of his cross, falls into such profound sadness and such grievous agony, that he sweats water and blood.”

Then an angel coming down to him, consoles and strengthens him. Doubtless, the celestial messenger represents to him the salutary effects of the sacrifice about to be accomplished: sin expiated, hell vanquished, heaven opened, God glorified in time and in eternity; or perchance he shows him all mankind, beseeching him to have pity on them and save them.

¹2 Cor. v. 21.

Jesus humbly accepts the services of the angel; but he will not suffer him to alleviate his agony. He still keeps before his eyes the sufferings which await him, the number and enormity of the sins which he has taken upon himself, the multitude of souls who will be lost through their own fault notwithstanding all that he is going to suffer for their redemption.

The pain which he feels is so intense that his heart contracts, and the blood accumulates in his chest. Yet, making an effort to control himself, he overcomes all the repugnance that he has allowed himself to feel, but by that very act his blood is so violently impelled that it rushes out through all the pores of his body, and, like a perspiration, penetrating his garments, flows to the ground, which it dyes a deep crimson.

Let us ask ourselves why he suffered that effusion of blood. Let us say to Jesus: "Why then is thy apparel red¹ as scarlet and dyed with thy blood? Neither the lashes of the whips, nor the nails of the cross nor the spear of the soldier, have drawn it from thy veins; why then does it flow?"

Ah! I understand: it is to testify to men that of thy own accord thou givest thy life to save them; that thy love for them is boundless, that thou desirest nothing so much as to be baptized with the baptism wherewith thou art to be baptized. It is to give hope of pardon to those who are going to put thee to death, and who, not daring to ask it by the blood which they will have shed in the pretorium or on Calvary, can always ask it through that which thou hast here shed voluntarily; it is to repair the sin committed in the garden of delights,

¹Isai. lxiii. 2.

and which, indeed, is fully repaired by the shedding of thy blood in this garden of sorrows.

O divine blood! thou art a salutary rain falling in benediction on the sterile earth accursed for four thousand years; thou art an eloquent voice which ascends to heaven only to ask for grace; thou art the more than sufficient price of the ransom of all mankind! O Jesus, generous Redeemer, who willest to suffer for us the punishment that we have deserved, thou makest contract to do so and signest it with thy blood. At this moment, thou receivest from thy Father the warrant of our condemnation, which thou art to annul by fastening it to the Cross.

Jesus is the high priest of the New Law; he comes to purify us, "not in water only, but in water and blood."¹ That mysterious sweat which we contemplate, is truly the aspersion of the people by the high priest as he goes up to the altar of holocaust. It is more: it is the beginning of the sacrifice of our Friend and Victim, by whom alone the remission of sins can be obtained.

APPLICATION

Let us not forget that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."² Yes, none are crowned but those who, like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, arm themselves with courage to do the will of God, even at the sacrifice of nature.

Let us pray for grace to overcome our repugnance. Let us on all occasions be courageous against ourselves. What is the combat that we have to sustain, compared

¹ John v. 6,

² Matt. xi. 12.

with that which Jesus sustained for us? Let us often recall his agony in the Garden of Olives, and, as St. Paul exhorts us, let us reflect that we have not yet "resisted unto blood."¹

Let us learn from the interior sufferings of Jesus, even after the angel's visit, that very often the presence of grace does not lessen the sense of our sorrows; that it really acts in us and strengthens us, but, as a rule, without sensibly manifesting itself; that we may have strength to do good without having a relish for so doing; and that, consequently, we ought to remain firm in the service of God even though we experience neither pleasure therein nor affection therefor.

Let us often think that it was our sins that overwhelmed Jesus with sorrow and reduced him to agony; that it was our crimes that brought on that painful sweat that would have caused his death, had he not, through charity for us, reserved himself for new torments.

Let us cast ourselves at his feet and beg his pardon. Let us kiss the ground which he reddened with his blood and let us water it with our tears. Let us adore that divine blood which is the price of our ransom. Let us reverently gather up some drops, that they may impart to us the grace of reconciliation, and imbue us with the sentiments wherewith the adorable Victim of our redemption was animated.

PRAYER

O my dear Master, what claims hast thou not on my gratitude and love! Grant then that these sentiments

¹Heb. xii. 4.

together with regret for my faults, may penetrate my soul at the contemplation of thy agony and bloody sweat. O let me cast myself at thy feet, and water with my tears the earth which thou hast bathed with thy blood; let me tell thee that I hope in thy mercy, and that I base my hope on thy infinite charity in becoming, notwithstanding thy natural repugnance, the victim for my salvation.

Résumé, page 384.

Let us contemplate Jesus prolonging his prayer:

1. He struggles in our behalf against divine justice.
2. He asks pardon for us from his Father.
3. An angel appears to him and strengthens his humanity.
4. Notwithstanding this visit, he feels extremely weak; but he courageously overcomes this feeling.
5. Then there comes on him a bloody sweat.

Let us behold that divine blood as it oozes through his garments and trickles down upon the ground.

Let us ask ourselves why he sheds it.

—Let us learn from this meditation:

1. To be courageous in overcoming ourselves.
2. To triumph, by grace, over all our repugnances.
3. To persevere in prayer and in the service of God.
4. To weep over our sins, over which Jesus wept so much.
5. To admire and adore him and bless him for that love, which impelled him to shed his blood to obtain for us grace before his Father.

SIXTH MEDITATION

THE SLEEP OF THE APOSTLES

Could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye, and pray.—Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

CONSIDERATION

Before entering the Garden of Olives, Jesus had told his disciples to watch and pray, lest they give way to the temptation to which his sufferings would expose them. He now repeats the same injunction to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, who had entered the garden with him: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch with me." Then he withdraws a stone's throw from them, and begins to pray.

What motives the apostles have to watch and pray! Jesus, their divine Master, prescribes it; he has warned them that they are going to be tried; that the shepherd is about to be stricken, and the sheep of the flock to be dispersed; they behold him preparing for his passion by most humble and persevering prayer; they know what interior sorrow overwhelms him; they hear his sighs and groans.

And yet, as though despising his warning and disregarding his sad state, they give way to sleep. O criminal indifference! the enemy is watching for an opportunity to surprise them, but they do not keep on their guard. They are weak, but they neglect to seek in prayer, the

strength which they need. Jesus suffers, but they do not compassionate him. He prays for them; but they do not pray with him. What pain he must feel! And yet he interrupts his prayer to come to them.

Comforter of the afflicted, he feels the want of being comforted; himself strength of the weak, he himself seeks a support. But no! vigilant and charitable Shepherd, he comes to his sheep to guard and preserve them from the danger that threatens them. He draws near the apostles, and addressing himself to him whom he has made their head, says, "What! could you not watch one hour with me?" Then speaking to them all, he adds: "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; for the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." These are indeed words of divine wisdom. What precious teachings they contain!

They forcibly remind us of our human frailty, of our promptness in forming good resolutions and our weakness in accomplishing them, of the war of the spirit against the flesh, and of the flesh against the spirit, of our constant danger of offending God, of the necessity of self-distrust, watchfulness, and prayer. But alas! how little we profit by these salutary lessons of our divine Master!

Having thus renewed his recommendations, Jesus returns to his prayer, which he soon interrupts again. O unexampled goodness and tenderness! Jesus receives no consolation; he is, as it were, abandoned by heaven and earth, and yet he is so occupied with his apostles and disciples, that he seems to think only of them. A second time he returns to his apostles, and is saddened to find them asleep. Nevertheless, he does not reproach

them. He regards them with compassion; he grieves for the frailty of man, alas! so great ever since the day of the first sin; and for the third time, he goes aside to pray.

In his third prayer he asks what he had already asked, that the chalice of his passion be removed; but doubtless he prays again that the faith of Simon Peter may not fail, and that the other disciples may be confirmed by him whom he has chosen for the head of his Church. He prays also for us who, like the apostles, share so little in his sufferings; and he pleads our cause with his Father.

Let us admire the infinite charity of our Savior, who takes our infirmities upon himself and supplies, in one sense, for our inability to watch and pray: for he watches and prays, in order to obtain saving grace even for the souls who are not actually disposed to do violence to themselves to practise virtue. Hence, when he returns a third time to his disciples, he no longer recommends vigilance to them; he confines himself to saying, with ineffable charity, "Sleep now, and take your rest;" words which may signify: "Have confidence, I have obtained for you the grace of profiting by the fruits of my passion and death, notwithstanding your little share in my sorrows: rely on me."

Nevertheless, since it is impossible for man to be saved without sharing to some extent in the sorrows of Jesus, our merciful Master urges them to make an effort to overcome themselves. "Arise," he says to them, "let us go; for behold he is at hand who is to betray me;" it is now you must prove, by your courage and fidelity, that you are really my disciples.

APPLICATION

It is especially to us religious that the Savior addresses his exhortation, "Watch and pray." Let us ask ourselves whether we hearken to it. Do we distrust ourselves? Are we conscious of our weakness? Do we know what risks we run, and do we endeavor to avoid them? Do we watch over our thoughts, which are sometimes so vain, our imagination, which is so extravagant, our senses, which are so inclined to evil, and which so often inflict deep wounds on our soul? Are we on our guard against our weakness so as to forestall the enemy and prevent him from entering and taking possession of our heart?

During meditation, do we watch in company with Jesus? Are we not in that state of indifference which is so painful to him? Do we not sometimes become weary in his presence, at the very moment when he calls us to watch and pray with him? Do we not allow ourselves to fall into the sleep of tepidity?

If so, let us listen to our divine Master telling us: "What! you sleep instead of praying! you sleep instead of combating the enemies of your salvation! you sleep instead of working seriously at your sanctification! you sleep instead of thinking of me, instead of meditating on the sufferings that I endure for you! You cannot watch with me! Know you not, then, how great an evil it is to fall into negligence, into a state of voluntary distraction during prayer, into that spiritual apathy which is revolting to my heart?"

Let us deplore our criminal conduct, but let us not be discouraged. Jesus prayed to merit for us the grace

to return to fervor. Let us give ear to his words. "Arise," he says; "awake from your sleep and follow me; I am going to enter on the career which you ought to follow in order to gain eternal glory; remember that only those shall prevail over their enemies who shall watch and pray with me."

Let us then, if we wish to obtain salvation, watch and pray unceasingly in union with him.

PRAYER

O Jesus, how long have I remained buried in the sleep of indifference and tepidity! An inexplicable torpor benumbs my soul and paralyzes my will. I feel that the flesh is indeed weak and prone to evil, and that the spirit, although quick in resolving, has not the strength to resist the enemy energetically by the practice of mortification. But can I any longer remain in this state?

What! is it for me that thou sufferest inconceivable pains, that thou sacrificest thyself? And I cannot meditate on thy sufferings for even a few moments! And perhaps at the end of the meditation that I now commence, I may have deserved the reproach of not being able to watch one short hour with thee!

Have pity on my weakness and come to my aid, O Beloved of my soul! Draw me from this deplorable lethargy. Say to me, "Arise, let us go;" but say it with that omnipotent voice which effects what it expresses, and humbly and fervently will I accompany thee in the way wherein thou wouldst have me walk.

Résumé, page 384.

Jesus said to his apostles: "Watch and pray."

1. Everything made this a duty for them.

2. But, overcome by fatigue, they sleep. What sorrow for Jesus! No one compassionates his sorrows.

3. He comes again, and says: "Watch ye, and pray."

4. But, alas! when he returns for the second time, he finds them again sleeping.

5. Leaving them, he goes to pray a third time, then he says to them: "Sleep on now, and take your rest. Rise, let us go."

—Let us enter into the spirit of this mystery:

1. Let us watch and pray with Jesus.

2. Let us not fall into the fatal sleep of tepidity; if we have fallen into it, let us hasten to arise from it.

3. Let us obey Jesus when he says, "Rise, let us go."

4. Let us mortify our senses that the spirit may not be weighed down by the flesh.

5. Let us make our meditation well, lest we incur the reproach of not being able to watch one hour with Jesus.

SEVENTH MEDITATION

COURAGE OF JESUS AFTER HIS PRAYER

Rise up; let us go.—Mark xiv. 42.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider our divine Savior ending his long and painful prayer, and quitting the place which he had bedewed with his tears and his blood: he has prepared himself by prayer for the consummation of his sacrifice. The moment has come when, to the pains of his heart, must be added pains of the body, and this moment he now regards without fear or sadness.

By his divine mind, from which nought can be hidden, he sees the soldiers and servants advancing to lay sacrilegious hands upon him; he perceives the torches that light their way glimmering throughout the trees of the garden; he hears their blasphemies and their death-cries; he distinguishes at their head the infamous disciple who has just betrayed him. He knows what torments await him. He sees in spirit the cords that are to bind his hands, the bandage that is to cover his eyes, the scourges that are to lacerate his members, the crown that is to torture his brow, the nails that are to pierce his hands and feet, the cross on which he is to suffer an infamous death. He knows, too, that his disciples are on the point of deserting him and taking to flight.

Nevertheless, he shows no further apprehension. But a moment since, he was dejected in mind, grieved in heart, and reduced to agony; now he is courageous and full of strength. He accepts without hesitation the great humiliations which he is to undergo; he is firmly resolved to drink to the dregs the chalice presented to him; he seems unmoved by the sight of torments and death; he goes with a firm step to awake his apostles and he says to them: "The hour is come: behold, the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. . . . Rise up; let us go: he that will betray me, is at hand."¹

How well this language shows the state of his soul, animated now with all its divine strength! His voice, which a moment before was subdued with fear, now manifests a firmness, a courage, and a resolution, which nothing can shake.

"Rise up; let us go:" behold the hour of combat is at hand, that hour for which I was sent, that hour which I have desired in order to show that I love my Father and do what he has commanded. I no longer fear torments: I resign myself to them; I even desire them with a great desire; I am eager for the accomplishment in my person of the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; for I long to restore my Father's glory, I long to save men, I long to merit for them all the graces which they need to combat with me, and with me to overcome the enemies of their salvation.

It is now, my adorable Savior, that thou settest forth as a giant to conquer sin and the devil. It is now that thou mayst say to thy eternal Father those words foretold of thee ages before:—Holocausts and other sacri-

¹Mark xiv. 41, 42.

fices did not suffice for the expiation of sin; wherefore thou gavest me a body; and then I said, "Behold I come, . . . that I should do thy will;"¹ behold I come ready to shed even the last drop of my blood to satisfy thy justice, to expiate sin, and to save souls.

But how has this change been wrought in thee, O divine Master? Whence comes that courage, that strength of soul infinitely above all that earth and hell can plot against thee? I hear thee tell me that it is from thy humble and persevering prayer in the Garden of Olives, from thy fervent and resigned prayer, which penetrated the heavens and ascended to the very throne of thy Father. And this courage which thou hast derived from prayer, thou wouldst communicate to thy disciples by addressing them in these words: "Arise, let us go, he is at hand who is to betray me." Arise, fear nothing: I am with you and I will sustain you in the fight.

But not to his disciples only does the Savior say: "Arise," be no longer weighed down by your defects, and drawn away by your evil inclinations. To us also he says, Arise and walk, advance towards perfection. "Let us go," and fear not, for I am with you. I am at your head, I ask of you only your co-operation. Do what you can, do not spare yourselves, and, on that condition, count on victory; for, with my grace and assistance, you can do everything necessary for salvation.

O Jesus, my Savior, how great is thy goodness towards us! Thou sayest not to us, "Arise and go;" for whither should we go without thee, if not to our eternal ruin? But thou sayest to us, "Arise, let us go"—to teach us

¹Ps. xxxix. 7-9.

that thou art with us, that thou guidest us in the right way, that thou sustainest us in our conflicts. For what can we fear in thy company, since thou art the very Author of grace, and the source of all our strength?

APPLICATION

It was not for himself, but rather for us, that Jesus Christ prayed in the Garden of Olives. It was to teach us how and in what circumstances we ought to pray, and also to merit for us the grace of being heard. But alas! how little we imitate his sublime example! Instead of praying, instead of having recourse to God in our trials, troubles, and temptations, we seek refuge in creatures when we are discouraged and dejected. Perhaps we are even so foolish as to think that we shall find relief from our trials and troubles, in some infraction of duty or in yielding to our own ideas and inclinations.

Let it not be so in future. Let us cast our eyes on Jesus deriving from prayer the courage necessary for his sacrifice; and in imitation of him, let us pray, and pray with fervor, especially in those moments of trial which, alas! are so frequent in the course of this life. Let us pray when we feel our spiritual strength diminish, when work frightens us and the religious life seems too painful. Let us pray when the future appears sad and gloomy, and the clouds that overshadow us shall clear away.

Let us pray when we are overtaken by adversity. Let us then prostrate ourselves before God, and offer him our sighs and tears: we shall rise full of strength and courage, and, trusting in him, we shall embrace gen-

erously, and even lovingly, the cross which he wishes us to bear.

Let us pray in union with Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives; but let our prayer have the qualities of his; let it be fervent, humble, and persevering. Let us pray, but with an ardor that will pierce the heavens and reach the feet of the Eternal.

Let us watch and pray with Jesus; let us beware of going alone to meet the enemy; let us never withdraw from our divine Master. With him we can do all, without him nothing. Let us pray and watch; let us never expose ourselves to danger, if we would not be ruined by our rashness. Blessed is he who prays and watches! He is calm and courageous in the moment of trial; he has no desire but that of immolating himself with Jesus for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

PRAYER

I know that afflictions are inevitable, and yet I shudder when I encounter them, and I lack the resignation and the strength to accept them; it is because I do not pray, or because I pray badly.

Give me, then, O Jesus, my divine Master, give me, I entreat thee, this spirit of prayer which is likewise the spirit of strength. Grant that in union with thee, I may prostrate myself before thy Father in my moments of anxiety or affliction, tell him the wants of my soul, and beseech him to have mercy on me. Perhaps the bitter cup may not be removed from me, but thy Father will grant me what is infinitely preferable: resignation in trials, courage in adversity, and even

love of suffering—the virtues by which alone I can become like unto thee, and deserve to share one day in thy glory.

Résumé, page 385.

How admirable is everything in Jesus!

But a few moments ago, he was overwhelmed with sadness, and seemed to require an angel to strengthen him; and, behold! now he is full of courage.

1. He rises resolutely.

2. He regards without fear the approach of his enemies.

3. He advances towards his disciples.

4. "Rise up; let us go," he says to them.

5. "Behold, he that will betray me is at hand."

—If we but acted like Jesus and with Jesus,

1. Our souls would be filled with courage.

2. We should be strong with the strength of God.

3. Nothing would oppose us in the practice of virtue.

4. We should be disposed to make the greatest sacrifices.

5. In union with Jesus, we should confront with the most entire confidence all the difficulties that meet us in the path of virtue.

EIGHTH MEDITATION

THE KISS OF JUDAS

Forthwith coming to Jesus, . . . he kissed him.—

Matt. xxvi. 49.

CONSIDERATION

Let us go back in thought to that moment, when Jesus, celebrating the last pasch with his apostles, said to them: "Amen I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me."¹ Let us consider the eleven apostles, asking him in candor and sincerity, "Is it I, Lord?"

Let us also consider Judas putting him the same question, when he had already sold him to the Jews for thirty pieces of silver. To perfidy he now joins sacrilege, by receiving into his guilty heart the body and blood of the adorable Savior. Immediately after the commission of this new crime, he goes out to find the Jews and to betray to them the Victim who is to be sacrificed to their envy. He knows that his divine Master is to go after supper to the Garden of Olives, and thither he determines to lead the band furnished him by the high priest.

When the time has come, he meets this troop of men made up of the very lowest of the people and a certain number of the soldiers and servants of the high-priest. He tells them how they may distinguish

¹Matt. xxvi. 21.

the Savior from his disciples: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, hold him fast."

Then he goes in advance of them to the garden, approaches Jesus whom he sees at a distance coming towards him with a sweet and gentle aspect. At the sight of his divine Master, Judas must have felt horrified; he must have hesitated to accomplish his crime: but alas! he has so often stifled remorse of conscience, that he now rejects this new grace, to which he might owe his salvation. The wretch dares approach Jesus, and say with affected kindness and hypocritical calmness, "Hail! Master."

O infamy! he calls him Master whom he has sold for thirty pieces of silver! whom he delivers up to the soldiers as a vile slave! whose school he has abandoned, base apostle that he is, to follow the inspiration of Satan and to accomplish the work of hell!

He calls him Master, and saluting him, advances to kiss him. "Stop, O Judas!" says St. Augustine, "what a heinous sacrilege is thine! Thou makest use of a token of love to inflict a deep wound, and under the symbol of friendship thou givest death!" "O perfidious man!" exclaims St. Ambrose, "how darest thou change into a treacherous sign the most expressive mark of union and friendship?"

But the crime of Judas is consummated; his signal has been understood; the innocent Victim is pointed out to his enemies! Jesus has shown no unwillingness to allow the base apostate to approach him: he has not rejected the touch of the traitor's foul lips, he has not turned away from him. "He lovingly applied his divine mouth," says St. Bernard, "which knew no deceit, to

that impious and sacrilegious mouth, from which came forth only malice and treason."

What a spectacle is here presented to our contemplation! Jesus embraces the most infamous of men, he presses him to his bosom, he seems to make but one with him! Holiness is confounded with sin, goodness and love with wickedness and hatred! What charity, what generosity!

Jesus will look on Peter to convert him, he will pray for his enemies, he will address words of ineffable consolation to the good thief: but he seems to do more for Judas. He gives him the kiss of reconciliation! O prodigy of mercy! who can henceforth despair of pardon, if he really ask it and sincerely repent of his sins?

But let us hear the words of our divine Master; for, like his acts, they also proclaim his goodness: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

"Friend!" what a title for a traitor! and yet Jesus calls him by that sweet name. Who would have expected so much goodness from the Sovereign of heaven and earth, from whom nothing is hidden, not even the innermost depths of the heart of this infamous disciple? He who has declared that he holds deceit in horror, calls by the name of "friend" the man who is to remain for all time the type of deceivers and hypocrites!

O Jesus, how great and generous is thy tenderness! Thou seest this unhappy man consummating his reprobation, and thou usest all the power of thy charity to soften his hardened heart, and to win it back to grace, salvation, and life!

After clasping him in thy arms, thou sayest to him, "Friend, whereto art thou come?" These words were an exhortation to him to re-enter into himself, as if thou shouldst say: "Thou art come to betray thy Master, to deliver him to his enemies. Confess thy crime, for I am ready to forgive thee; thou seest that, far from rejecting thee, I press thee lovingly to my heart."

But no! Judas will not repent, he will not ask pardon of his divine Master; he perversely rejects all the graces offered to him; he is dragged down by his sacrilege to the very depths of the abyss, and thus finds every way of escape cut off.

APPLICATION

We shudder at the thought of the crime and the fate of Judas; but do we consider that his crime and his fate may be ours, if we do not take another way than that which he followed? Like him, we are companions of the Savior, admitted to secret and most intimate communion with him, nourished with the Eucharistic Bread, and called by the name of friends; but do we not abuse, as he did, the graces bestowed upon us? Do we never allow ourselves to be governed by our evil inclinations? Let us examine ourselves on this point. Let us distrust our passions, and let us combat them vigorously, for there is none of them that may not lead us to the most deplorable excesses and the greatest misfortunes.

Let us take warning from the example of Judas. It is not all at once that he becomes a deicide. Had he been told some months before, "Thou shalt sell thy

Savior, thou shalt deliver him to his enemies," he would indignantly have denied the possibility of such a crime; and yet he sank to this depth of wickedness!

We, too, now resent as an insult even the least suspicion of our loyalty; we should be indignant if we were thought capable of betraying our God. And yet if we are not faithful to divine inspirations, if we do not profit by the graces bestowed on us, if we neglect our duties, our fate shall be that of Judas; for if we walk in the way that he followed, we shall assuredly fall over the precipice in which it ends. We also may one day say to the devil and our passions, "What will you give me, and I will deliver to you my divine Master? Grant me this satisfaction, this honor, this pleasure, and I will drive Jesus from my heart, and give up my soul to you."

God grant that such a misfortune may never befall us; that, on the contrary, we may always say: "Divine Savior, rather a thousand times let me lose all and sacrifice all, than be separated from thee even for a single moment!"

PRAYER

O Jesus, from whom nothing is hidden, look down upon me in mercy, and if thou dost discover in my heart any disorderly affection, destroy it; if any tie which binds it to creatures, break it. What matters the suffering this will cause me, if only I remain faithful to thee? Let me not be so unfortunate as to abandon or betray thee, O thou tenderest of friends and best of masters!

The crime of Judas has filled me with horror. Oh!

grant that there may be no more Judases among Christians, and especially among religious. Check us at the first step in the way of evil; help us to walk faithfully in thy footsteps, so that on the last day we may go with confidence to thee, and receive from thee the kiss of peace which will admit us to supreme felicity.

Résumé, page 385.

Judas, one of the twelve, betrays his divine Master.

1. He promises to deliver him up to the Pharisees for thirty pieces of silver.

2. Guilty of sacrilege, he leaves the supper-room.

3. He places himself at the head of a band of ruffians, he determines on a kiss as the sign of his treason.

4. Coming to Jesus, he says, "Hail, Rabbi!"

5. Then he kisses him.

And Jesus receives his perfidious kiss . . . He embraces him and gives him even the name of friend.

—This is a saving grace: Judas refuses it, and persists in his sin.

1. Let us deplore the crime of this wretch.

2. Let us tremble, for, alas! we, too, may betray Jesus.

3. Let us take care that no passion rules in our hearts. Let us sever energetically every attachment to creatures.

4. Let us never communicate without having the requisite dispositions.

5. Let us pray for fidelity and perseverance in the service of God.

NINTH MEDITATION

JESUS TAKEN BY THE JEWS

Then the band, and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him.—John xviii. 12.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our adorable Savior advancing to meet his enemies after receiving the kiss of Judas. He is a victim going voluntarily to death, a tender lamb that, far from complaining when about to be led to the altar of sacrifice, presents itself to those who are sent to take its life. Nay more, he is the Son of God offering himself to his Father for the redemption of mankind.

Behold him, then, face to face with his enemies, who seem confounded in his divine presence; for not one of them dares speak to him, much less seize his person. He must speak first, as if to lead them to express their intentions: ‘Whom seek ye?’ he asks. Their embarrassment must have been so great, that they would not have dared to answer, had they not read in his features an invitation to express their thoughts, and to declare the motive of their coming to that place at that hour. They tell him, therefore, with a certain reserve, that they seek Jesus of Nazareth. Wishing to give them a new proof of his divinity, and again to offer them a means of salvation, Jesus answers, “I am he,” and immediately all drew back and fell to the ground.

“How wonderful it is,” says St. Cyril, “to see these barbarous men, who have come to take our adorable Savior prisoner, thrown to the ground by a single word of his! How beautiful it is to recognize in this incident the almighty power of God, manifesting itself in Jesus Christ at the moment when, like a slave, he is going to offer his hands to be bound!” “Cease,” says St. Ambrose, “to speak to me of the legions of angels that Jesus might order from heaven; for in hurling his enemies to the ground with a single word, he manifests his power in a far different manner, and proves more effectually that he is the Messiah foretold by the prophets.”

Nevertheless, it is not to prevent his enemies from seizing him that Jesus works this prodigy, but rather to make them enter into themselves. That word which casts them to the ground is a shaft of mercy; it is the grace which calls them to repentance. But, alas! the voice of the Lord, which, according to Scripture, “breaketh the cedars,”¹ is of no avail with Judas, or those who accompany him; their hearts are too hardened, they have abused grace too long to yield now to its influence.

Yet, willing to give them still another proof of his power and to manifest his affection for his disciples, he again speaks to this band of wretches, and tells them with calm dignity: “If, therefore, you seek me, let these go their way.”² At this command, the soldiers open their ranks and allow the apostles to escape, although it would have been to their interest to detain them together with their Master.

¹Ps. xxviii. 5.

²John xviii. 8.

How touching is this mark of the Redeemer's love, and how well it verifies the words which he had addressed to his Father: "Of those whom thou gavest me, I have lost not one!" Forgetful of his own safety, he thinks only of his disciples; ready to accept captivity and death for himself, he secures to them life and liberty.

Jesus is not content with giving these two tokens of his power; he compels his enemies to hear his reproaches. He once more addresses them and says: "Are you come out, as it were against a thief," he asks, "with swords and clubs? When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against me."¹ How effectively this majestic language, together with the accompanying facts, proves that our divine Savior is truly God, the master of his freedom, and the willing victim of his sacrifice!

But the moment is at last come when he is to give full liberty of action to his enemies, "that the scriptures may be fulfilled. . . . This is your hour and the power of darkness." He gives himself up to their power. And the wretches seize him, load him with chains, and drag him away with them.

Behold, then, Christian souls, behold your Savior bound as a malefactor; behold the true Samson taken by the cruel Philistines; behold the innocent lamb led to slaughter; nay more, behold your God, who for your sakes has delivered himself to your enemies!

"O cruel and perfidious soldiers!" exclaims St. Ambrose, "do you, then, load with chains the Author of life and liberty, him at whose feet you ought to cast

¹Luke xxii. 52, 53.

yourselves, praying him to free you from the bonds of your iniquities?"

Alas! devoured by hatred and envy, these wicked men do not hesitate to accomplish their crime; they rejoice at having in their power him whose destruction they have sworn. And he, out of love for us, allows himself to be seized by the throat without resistance; he even holds out his hands to be bound by cords, in order to merit for us deliverance from the bonds of sin, wherewith the devil holds us captive.

APPLICATION

Let us adore the power of our divine Redeemer who by a single word casts his enemies to the ground. Let us reflect that he often addresses the same word to us, and let us examine whether it produces its full effect in our souls.

Does he not say to us: "I am he" whom you offend; "I am he" whom you serve so badly; "I am he" who ought to be the continual object of your thoughts, and who nevertheless am seldom present to your mind, even on the days when I have given myself to you in the sacrament of my love? Oh! let us, then, learn what our adorable Master requires of us, and let us perform it generously.

Let the power which he manifests to his enemies by the words, "I am he," recall to our minds that which he will manifest before the whole world when he shall come, at the last day, to judge all men. Let us be impressed with salutary fear, and say with St. Augustine: "How terrible when he shall come to reign, will

this Jesus be, who is so terrible now when about to die!"

Let us reflect that our adorable Savior permitted himself to be taken prisoner and bound by his enemies, to merit for us the grace of severing the bonds that keep us in sin; to obtain for us strength and courage to break off every attachment to creatures, every fatal habit that would retain us in evil, every dangerous connection that might become in the hands of Satan a chain to drag us into the abyss of evil. Let us further reflect that it is to obtain for us the grace to be attached to God alone, to his service, and to our holy vocation, and to remain forever united to our divine Redeemer by the sweet ties of piety and charity.

O how much he has loved us! He is truly the slave of his infinite charity. It is love that delivers him to his enemies, that binds his hands, that drags him to the altar of immolation. How can we recall this without blessing his mercy, exalting his goodness, and resolving to love him forever!

PRAYER

O Jesus! who, to break our chains, didst consent to be bound like a malefactor by an insolent and ferocious band, we give thee thanks for having freed us from the shameful bondage of our passions, and made us partakers of the liberty of the children of God. O how precious is the freedom which thou hast purchased for us! But alas! it often happens that we cease to value it, and unwillingly forfeit it.

Unhappy that we are, thou hast delivered us from

the bonds of sin by the grace of baptism, and afterwards by that of the sacrament of penance, and we, by our negligence, forge for ourselves new chains! Have mercy on us, O Lord, and help us. Grant that we may persevere in our present resolution of being wholly thine, so that our souls may have no other bonds than those of thy most pure love.

Résumé, page 386.

What subjects for meditation this circumstance presents!

1. Jesus says to his enemies, "Whom seek ye?"
2. They fall to the ground when he says, "I am he."
3. He commands them to let the apostles go.
4. He reproaches them for the manner in which they came to him.

5. He gives them power to seize him.

Then these wretches fall upon him and bind him as if he were a vile criminal.

Then his apostles also abandon him and flee.

—Let us reflect here:

1. On the power of Jesus in restraining his enemies at will.
2. On the goodness to them.
3. On his free acceptance of the sufferings which he is about to undergo.
4. On his love for his apostles, and their abandonment of him.

5. On his love for us: a love which made him accept shameful bonds, to merit for us the grace of breaking the chains of sin and escaping the tyranny of the devil.

TENTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

Then, apprehending him, they led him to the high priest's house.—Luke xxii. 54.

CONSIDERATION

Jesus is in the power of his enemies. He had said: "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners,"¹ and his words are now fulfilled. The Passion of his soul began hours before; that of his body begins now.

What sorrows, what opprobrium does he not endure! Weakened by his agony and bloody sweat, heart-broken by the treason of Judas and the flight of the other Apostles, he sees himself in the power of inhuman soldiers who pitilessly mock and insult him. The prophets had described him in that state, and represented him as a lamb surrounded by ravenous dogs, ferocious wolves, and roaring lions seeking to devour him.

"Hold him fast," Judas had said to the soldiers; see that he does not escape. And following his advice, they surround him and bind him tightly with many cords.

Let us contemplate the true Samson in the hands of

¹Mark xiv. 41.

these new Philistines. They exult in at last having him in their power, and their triumph is most insolent and tyrannical. Listen to their shouts of mockery and derision, as they call their divine captive every odious name, and offer him every insult, which he receives without resistance, without anger, without complaint, and without emotion.

He can renew the prodigy of Samson, break his bonds, and deprive of life those who have bound him. He has but to will it, and immediately his chains shall be broken, and all his enemies struck dead! But such is not his purpose. He desires to expiate our sins, which are an abuse of our liberty. He wishes to merit for us the grace to break the chains of our iniquities and evil habits. He longs to free us from the slavery of the devil and establish us in the liberty of the children of God. He is eager to merit for the martyrs and confessors of the faith all the graces which they shall need, when the enemies of religion shall seize them, cast them to prison, and drag them before the judgment seat. Therefore does he hold out his hands for the chains which are to bind them. What charity for us! What devotedness in behalf of the Church!

"If he represses his power," says St. Leo, "if he permits his enemies to vent all their hatred on his adorable person, it is by that same will whereby he has always loved us." If he is in the power of his enemies, it is through love for us. O love, how strong thou art! thou bindest God himself!

Meanwhile, the sad procession sets forward on its march. What a humiliation for Jesus thus to be led away like a malefactor! He makes no resistance; he

alleges neither weakness nor fatigue; he makes no comment on the way in which he is treated: he is a lamb, mute in the hands of those who lead him to the place of slaughter, to the altar on which he is to be immolated. He does all he is ordered without one word of complaint; he takes the way pointed out to him; he walks wherever his guides please, through mud, through water, and over stones.

Forgetting himself to think only of reconciling us with heaven, he regards all the contempt, and all the indignity with which he is treated, as strokes of divine justice, avenging on his sacred humanity the sins of men; and he offers these sufferings to the Eternal Father, to obtain from his infinite mercy the pardon of all our iniquities. He makes no movement, breathes no sigh, suffers no pain, that he does not apply to our salvation. He thinks only of leading us from the way of vice and perdition to that of virtue and happiness.

The soldiers continue to treat him with the greatest inhumanity. Fearing that he may escape them, or that some of his friends may come to deliver him, they urge him to hasten his steps, some pulling him by the cords that bind him, others brutally pushing him on; some striking him with sticks, others belching out the most revolting blasphemies and applying to him the vilest epithets.

The cortège at last reaches Jerusalem. O how different is this entry of Jesus from that which he had made five days before! Then a great multitude came forth to meet him, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"¹ and now he is in the hands of cruel enemies

¹Matt. xxi. 9.

clamoring for his death, insulting him most shamefully, and seeming emboldened, under cover of the darkness, to lay sacrilegious hands upon him. Then, with palms in their hands, they went to meet him as a conqueror; now they regard him as a criminal and treat him with the grossest indignity.

O strange fickleness of the world! O ingratitude of men unmindful of the benefits which they have received from Jesus, repaying only with outrage the miracles which he has wrought in their behalf! O inconceivable patience, O boundless generosity of our divine Redeemer, resigning himself to every humiliation to restore us to the state of glory from which we had fallen, and accepting all kinds of suffering and opprobrium as so many penalties for our sins, with the guilt of which he is charged before his Father!

APPLICATION

Let us admire the patience, the meekness, and the infinite charity of Jesus, the august Victim of our redemption, in allowing himself to be dragged, without a murmur, to the altar of sacrifice; nay rather in going thither of his own accord, through his great desire of working out our salvation. Let us compassionate his sufferings on this occasion when, surrounded by a crowd of wicked men, he is dishonored, buffeted, and treated as the greatest of villains.

Let us magnify his generosity: let us never forget that he became a captive to deliver us from the slavery of sin; that he allowed himself to be loaded with chains to break ours; that he was dragged to death to restore

us to the way of life. O how wonderful is his love for us! Who can ever celebrate worthily the divine Heart whence it radiates!

To form an idea of what we owe to him, we should have to comprehend the misfortune of a soul which is held captive by the devils and subject to their will,—which they degrade more and more,—cruelly tyrannizing over it, and dragging it down to the abyss of everlasting tears and undying despair. What a fate! And it is from this fate that Jesus has delivered us by his sufferings!

Let us bless our divine Redeemer and profit by his merits. Perhaps our souls are now slaves of Satan. If so, let us have recourse to Jesus, reminding him of what he has done for our deliverance; let us beseech him to assist us by his grace to break the shameful bonds wherewith the devils hold us fast, and strengthen us to follow him in the narrow way which alone leads to life. Let us then walk in his footsteps. With him, let us take the way of suffering and humiliation, and we shall one day arrive with him at the abode of everlasting bliss and glory.

PRAYER

O Jesus! who, in order to merit for us the privilege of being freed from the devils, didst suffer thyself to be dragged ignominiously from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, and along the streets of that city through which thou hadst so often passed multiplying thy benefits, be merciful to sinners! How pitiable is their lot! Thy enemies and ours hold them in their power, and lead them

whithersoever they will, nay, even drag them down to hell. O come to their assistance, and save them!

O Jesus, have mercy on my poor soul. Alas! am I not myself the slave of demons? Do they not keep me in the bonds of self-love, pride, and sloth? do they not drag me whither they will? are they not leading me on to tepidity, to bring me afterwards to sin and death? Grant, by thy grace, that I may break these odious chains, so that till death I may be a slave to thy love alone.

Résumé, page 386.

Jesus is in the power of his enemies.

The divine Victim advances to the altar of sacrifice. Let us follow him in this painful journey.

1. Jesus is bound and is surrounded by soldiers.
2. They oblige him to walk, even to hasten his steps.
3. They pitilessly insult him.
4. He enters Jerusalem. What a difference between this entrance and that of five days before!
5. He traverses the streets of the ungrateful city.
—Contemplating him in these sad circumstances,
 1. Let us admire his patience and his meekness.
 2. Let us admire his generosity towards us; for he delivers himself up to his enemies in order to free us from the power of the enemies of our salvation.
 3. Let us pity the souls whom the devil holds captive.
 4. Let us see whether our soul be not of that number.
 5. Let us hasten to break, by grace, the bonds of sin.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION

JESUS BEFORE ANNAS

They led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas.—John xviii. 13.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider our divine Savior in the power of his enemies, who have determined to effect his ruin. They wish to have him declared guilty of death, and to have this judgment confirmed by the governor. But what reason can they assign for the condemnation of a man who had defied them to convict him of a single sin? Above all, how is Pilate to be induced to sanction a sentence which lacks sufficient grounds and is therefore evidently unjust? Their envy and hatred might indeed lead them to sacrifice an innocent man, but they have no reason to think that the governor shares their sentiments. And yet his concurrence is indispensable to the realization of their designs.

It was expedient, then, that they should put forward some apparently reasonable pretext for making accusations against Jesus. Hence they adopted the plan of indicting him before their own tribunals, and of afterwards concerting according to his answers, the charges to bring against him before Pilate's tribunal.

They begin by taking him to Annas, the former high-priest, a proud, avaricious, cruel, and voluptuous man,

an inveterate enemy of the life and person of Jesus. Having grown old in malice, he was the fittest person to enter into the views of the other enemies of our divine Savior, and to suggest the means of securing the condemnation of the Just Man, whose ruin they were compassing. They wished also to give him the barbarous satisfaction of seeing at his feet the man whose virtue and reputation so strongly excited his hatred and envy.

In the hope that this time they would be successful in their efforts to bring the Savior before him for judgment, Annas had all things prepared; the tribunal was erected, the judges were assembled, and his partisans were warned to be ready to applaud the iniquitous sentence which he hoped to pronounce.

Meanwhile Jesus arrives and is brought by the soldiers into that impious assembly; all eyes are turned on him, and each one seems to have no thought, no desire, no ambition, but to see him confounded, humbled, and condemned to death.

Let us, with the liveliest compassion, contemplate him in the state to which he is reduced. There he stands as a criminal in the presence of his enemies; his torn and disordered garments bear witness to the ill treatment which he has already received; his face is pale and haggard; his head is bowed, his eyes are cast down; his hair, still damp with the sweat of agony, falls dishevelled on his shoulders; his knees are bending with fatigue; his hands are bound and manacled like those of a common malefactor; his ears hear nothing but insults and blasphemies against his adorable person and his divine doctrine; his heart is steeped

in the bitterest sorrow. He is, indeed, the Victim of the great sacrifice, the Lamb about to be immolated by the fury of men to the justice of God which he is to satisfy for our crimes.

Annas interrogates Jesus; but our divine Master refuses to answer him. His silence, which afforded his enemies an occasion of re-entering into themselves, did but increase their fury, and because it defeated their projects, only served to renew their cruel outrages against him.

O what a subject of wonder to the celestial spirits was the Most High, the thrice holy God, standing before a wretched man as a criminal before his judge! What must have been their surprise and indignation, at hearing an infamous sinner address reproaches to him who is virtue itself—at seeing a vile creature authoritatively question his Creator, an ignorant man attempt to catch in his words the very Wisdom of God, a sacrilegious priest arrogate to himself the right of judging the eternal Pontiff!

Like them, let us be filled with awe. But let us not be surprised; for although we know by too sad an experience that man is capable of all evil, yet we know also that the heart of our Savior is too generous not to drain alone, through love for us, this chalice of sorrow and humiliation. He drinks it in long draughts now when he gives all the powers of darkness freedom to act; he suffers cruel pains in that hall where of all that multitude there is not one but insults and abuses him.

And yet he remains calm and resigned: he utters not a word, he makes no complaint. His heart is incapable

of hatred or resentment, and is filled with love and pity for his enemies. He offers to his divine Father the ill treatment which he receives, and he prays for the salvation of those even who abuse him.

APPLICATION

Let us learn from the example of our divine Redeemer to bear without complaint the injustice of men, and to love even our enemies. Disciples of a God despised, hated, and calumniated, need we be surprised, dare we complain, at being treated like our Master? If we are accused, despised, and rejected, let us think of Jesus before Annas. Let us listen to the accusations made against him, and the insult addressed to him; and then let us ask ourselves whether we have a right to pride ourselves on a reputation often ill-understood, whilst our Lord and our God was buffeted and overwhelmed with degradation.

Let us, therefore, be patient and resigned, if we are humbled or outraged, if all manner of evil is said of us falsely! Did not Jesus suffer infinitely more? Are we like him, free from blame? Can we challenge our enemies to convict us of sin? We are deceived if we hope to sanctify ourselves in any other way than that of humility and abnegation. It is the only one that Christ followed; no other can lead to salvation.

Let us take care lest some disorderly passion be the principle of our words, actions, or conduct; let us often examine the motive from which we act; whether we truly seek God and not the gratification of self-love. Let us watch carefully over the affections of our heart and the

thoughts of our mind, so as to exclude all envy and jealousy; let us reflect whither those passions led the Jews in their treatment of our Lord. Let us love our brothers; let charity reign supreme in our souls. Let our line of conduct be the very opposite of that of the Pharisees; let us be severe towards ourselves and indulgent to others.

Let us always act with uprightness and simplicity, avoiding all deceit and cunning, for sooner or later the double mind shall be confounded. Let us keep faithfully to this line of conduct; and we shall thus gladden the divine heart of Jesus, offer him some reparation for the outrages which he endured from the Jews, and apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice.

PRAYER

O Jesus, eternal Wisdom, they are indeed fools who oppose thee! Thy very silence suffices to defeat their schemes, and put them to confusion! Give me, I beseech thee, simplicity and uprightness of heart, that I may never be inspired with that carnal prudence which is but folly in thy eyes, and which ends only in confusion. Free me, O my God! from all envy and prejudice, and grant that charity alone may reign in my soul.

Grant me also the grace of sincere humility. How shameful it is that I resemble thee so little! I have beheld thee an object of contempt to men: shall I, then, still desire their esteem? O no! let it be so no more, O my divine Master! Grant me grace to walk faithfully in thy footsteps, and to prize only what may render me conformable to thee.

Résumé, page 387.

Jesus is conducted to Annas, a jealous and cunning old man.

Let us contemplate our divine Savior before this first tribunal :

1. He is standing, bound like an infamous criminal.
2. His disheveled hair and disordered garments reveal the cruel treatment which he has already endured.
3. They cease not to insult him.
4. The high-priest interrogates him.
5. But Jesus keeps silence, and thus defeats the project of the Jews, who wish to find in his words matter for accusation against him.

—Let us gather for the fruits of this meditation,

1. To suffer with patience and resignation.
2. To be charitable even to our enemies.
3. Never to complain of any injustice.
4. To free ourselves from all prejudice and jealousy, to judge no one unfavorably.
5. Always to act with uprightness and simplicity.

TWELFTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS BROUGHT TO CAIPHAS

Annas sent him bound to Caiphas, the high priest.—

John xviii. 24.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior still standing before the pontiff Annas, who continues to humiliate him and to put him insidious questions. But he makes no reply and thus disconcerts his enemies. Hence this first examination is of no avail. Eternal Wisdom defeats the malice of hell, and proves that there is nothing blameworthy in the conduct of Jesus, and that, consequently, those who sought his condemnation are themselves deserving of such sentence.

But these wretches, blinded by envy, do not reflect on the injustice of their conduct; they are determined to carry out their iniquitous design. Annas can find nothing reprehensible in Jesus; nevertheless, he orders him to be still more tightly bound, and to be brought before the tribunal of Caiphas, his son-in-law, who was high priest for that year.

Let us behold our divine Redeemer again dragged along by those who had treated him so inhumanly in the journey from the Garden of Olives to Jerusalem; let us accompany him from the tribunal of Annas to that of Caiphas, where he is to undergo greater

insults than those he has already experienced, after suffering on the way all sorts of indignity and outrage.

Let us contemplate him traversing the streets of Jerusalem on that night of gloom and guilt. He is bound with cords, as we learn from the holy Gospel; his steps are tottering, his whole appearance denotes excessive fatigue, nay, utter prostration. And yet the soldiers and the servants mock his pains and pitilessly insult him; they pull violently the cords that bind him; they push him rudely from side to side; they seem to profit by the darkness of night to exercise their cruelty more freely. Among these wretches are several Pharisees, who scoff at him and mock him. Thus it is that the horrible series of sacrilegious mockeries commences, which shall continue till the moment when our divine Savior expires on Calvary. Who shall tell us what he is now suffering? who shall fathom the abyss of grief in which his heart is plunged?

He is king of Sion, and he receives in Sion, and from his own subjects, only outrage and ignominy; he is preceded and followed by a great crowd, clamoring for his death. The noise along the route, made by this hideous mob, awakes the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who inquire what is going on, and soon come forth to increase the already large number of those who are demanding his death.

If, from time to time, Jesus raises his eyes, he sees not even one of his own followers to console him, at least by his presence; he meets no pitying face. In those streets of Jerusalem where he had performed so many cures, he beholds only enemies eager for his ruin. O what a sword of grief pierces his divine

soul! Those who abuse him and seek to compass his death, are his own people, his own children; and he has for them infinitely more love than the fondest of mothers could have for an only son. His love for them is without bounds, and he is despised, hated, and rejected by them. All are animated with the same fury against him, all load him with curses as they drag him before a bloody tribunal!

How eloquently the state to which he is reduced in the very first stages of his grievous passion speaks to our hearts! Come, my children, our adorable Master seems to say; behold how much I love you, since it is for you that I submit to such humiliation. Behold me in the power of furious enemies. No one takes up my defence; my friends and my kindred have abandoned me, my apostles have forsaken me; I bear alone the weight of my sorrow, because I must bear alone the burden of your iniquities. The pain that I feel is that which your crimes have deserved; the chains wherewith I am loaded, are the bonds whereby the devil held you captive and was dragging you to the eternal abyss. I patiently suffer my enemies to utter the most horrible imprecations against me, in order to preserve you from the curse of God which you have deserved. I resign myself to all their ill-treatment in order to save you from the punishment reserved for sinners. In order to preserve you from the sentence of damnation which was so justly your due, I will permit the tribunal before which they are bringing me, to pronounce an iniquitous sentence upon me.

O what should be our sentiments of gratitude at the sight of our Lord's devotedness in sacrificing him-

self for us, in allowing himself for our sakes to be dragged ignominiously through the streets of Jerusalem, to be brought before the supreme tribunal of the nation, and there to be interrogated and judged as a criminal!

He is the thrice holy God, and he consents to be taken prisoner, and afterwards condemned as a malefactor; nay, he is even now condemned by the members of the grand Council, before whom he has not yet appeared, but who long ago decided to pass sentence of death upon him. He is a victim foredoomed to a cruel immolation, resigning himself to every pain in order to expiate our sins.

APPLICATION

We have contemplated our adorable Savior, the anointed King of Sion, given up to the power of the wicked, ignominiously dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, receiving nought but outrage in the very capital,—hearing, instead of acclamations and shouts of joy, only insults, curses, and blasphemies.

Let us not forget this circumstance of his passion, when, in the discharge of our duties, we pass along the streets of the city in which we are employed. Let us be recollected, modest, united with God; let us pray, meditate, and watch over our senses. Should we become objects of derision, let us esteem ourselves blessed in being treated like our divine Master; like him, let us bear this with patience and resignation, and pray for the conversion of those who insult us.

Let us, by our fervor and fidelity in the service of

Jesus, try to make him forget the sorrow wherewith his divine heart was overwhelmed during his passion. Let us revive in our hearts the most lively sentiments of love for him and gratitude for his benefits to us, remembering that he endured curses and blasphemies to merit for us the grace not to be accursed of God his Father; and that he endured all manner of abuse in order to free us from the everlasting pain and contempt that we ought to suffer on account of our sins.

With thoughts like these in our minds, how could we fail to love him with the greatest love, to bless and thank him unceasingly, and devote ourselves unreservedly to him; regretting only our inability to do more for his glory?

Let us prostrate ourselves in his presence, offer him our homage, and form the sincere resolution, not only to do nothing that might displease him, but also to act in all things, only through love for him and in perfect conformity to his divine will.

PRAYER

I adore thee, O my divine Redeemer, as thou art led from the house of Annas to that of Caiphas, and left to the mercy of a band of wretches who unceasingly insult and maltreat thee in every possible way. They know that the people still favor thee; wherefore they profit by the darkness of night to torture thee and glut their rage upon thee. Soon alas! they will gain over the populace, and then they will no longer fear to abuse thee in open day and before the multitude. Hence, the very darkness of night is for thee, at this

moment, an occasion of suffering, to which thou resignest thyself without uttering a single complaint.

But why, O my adorable Savior, wouldst thou suffer by night and by day? Is it not because thou art the Victim of expiation, and night and day have been equally profaned by our sins? Oh! grant that I may weep both day and night for those sins which are the true cause of thy suffering, and that I may never more commit them.

Résumé, page 387.

Let us contemplate Jesus Christ:

1. Humbled and derided before Annas.
2. Bound tightly and sent to Caiphas.
3. Traversing the streets of Jerusalem.
4. Enduring all sorts of insult.
5. Suffering himself to be conducted before the assembly of the wicked, who are eager to take away his life.

—Let us enter his divine heart and admire its sentiments.

1. What patience! what resignation!
2. He has only kind feelings for even his most cruel enemies.
3. He loves them and wishes their salvation.
4. He loves all men and sacrifices himself for them.
5. He offers for each and every one of them, himself and his sufferings to his heavenly Father.

How can we help loving him most ardently, and devoting ourselves unreservedly to him!

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION

JESUS BEFORE CAIPHAS

They . . . led him to Caiphas, the high priest.—Matt. xxvi. 57.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider before what persons Jesus is about to appear. Annas sends him bound to Caiphas, his son-in-law, and to the council of the ancients and doctors of the law assembled at the house of that pontiff.

Caiphas was a cunning man who, St. Jerome asserts, had sold the pontifical dignity for gold. He had long been seeking the death of Jesus, and he had given public proof of this in an assembly called together after the resurrection of Lazarus. For on that occasion, addressing the Pharisees present, he spoke these words, the full meaning of which he did not then understand: “You know nothing at all; neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”¹

Caiphas was the author of the base plot formed against Jesus, whose most cruel and hypocritical enemy he is. It was he that sent his servants to Gethsemane to seize our divine Master, and bring him into his presence. At this late hour of the night, he assembles in his house, the council of the nation, composed of

¹John xi. 49, 50.

enemies of Jesus, of which he is president by virtue of his office.

Let us go in spirit to the hall where the priests, the ancients of the people, and the doctors of the law, are seated, awaiting the arrival of the august Captive. They form that iniquitous assembly of which the Holy Ghost had said by the mouth of David: "From the face of the wicked who have afflicted me. My enemies have surrounded my soul."¹ They likewise fulfil the words of the book of Wisdom, that the wicked form plots against the just, saying: "Let us condemn him to a most shameful death."²

How clearly these words reveal the perversity animating the chiefs of the Jewish nation at this moment which Jesus has called the "hour of the powers of darkness!" After deciding beforehand to put to death him whose holiness and justice excited their envy, it is indeed they who say among themselves: "Let us condemn him," and not, "Let us examine whether he deserves to be condemned."

They know that in him there is nothing to censure, for he has publicly said to them, "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"³ They know that his whole life has been spent in doing good to men; they know that he has healed the sick, driven out devils, and raised many of the dead to life. "But," says St. Augustine, "these wretches appear to have forgotten this, and like persons in the delirium of fever, they are angry with the physician who has come to cure them, and they combine to destroy him."⁴

¹Ps. xvi. 9.

²Wisdom ii. 20.

³John viii. 46.

⁴Treatise on Psalms, Ps. lxiii. 2.

The chief priests and the doctors of the law are those husbandmen mentioned in the Gospel, to whom the father of the family sent his own son, and who plot and say to one another: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and . . . cast him out of the vineyard."¹

This tribunal, before which Jesus is about to appear, is not composed of upright men, assembled to examine his case and administer justice to him; but rather of murderers who have usurped the place of judges, and have but one end in view, the immolation of him whom they make a pretence of trying. O what injustice! what a subversion of all order! what hypocrisy! They are criminals, miserable slaves of their passions; and they arrogate to themselves the right of summoning before them to be judged him who is justice itself, him who is the supreme judge of the living and the dead! Under the pretence of defending law and religion, they plot the death of the supreme Law-giver, the very Author of religion! Apparently, they are animated by zeal for divine worship; but, in reality, they are consumed by a base and cruel envy of him whose glory and sanctity they cannot endure.

Such are the men before whom Jesus is about to be arraigned. As, ignominiously bound, and surrounded by soldiers and the servants of the high-priest, he arrives in the hall where they are assembled, all eyes are turned upon him, and every member of the council manifests a barbarous pleasure in seeing him in the attitude of a criminal awaiting sentence.

Who shall tell us the feelings of our adorable Master? He sees only enemies, who have no fear of God and no

¹Matt. xxi. 38, 39.

reverence for the laws of justice. In that assembly of the wicked, he appears crushed by the weight of his humiliations, with nothing to meet his gaze but what increases his pain and sorrow. No words but those of insult and blasphemy strike his ear; no friendly look meets his eye; no one takes up his defence, no one says a word in his behalf, no one recalls the holiness of his life, no one speaks of the sublimity of his doctrine nor of the good that he has done. All seek his death without having even the shadow of a reason for so doing, without being able to convict him of any fault or any violation of law. "And this," says St. Augustine, "is their great iniquity; for it is at this moment that he might again say to them: 'Many good works I have shown to you from my Father; for which of those works do you take my life?'"¹

But no! he does not repeat these words, for now his hour has come. The willing Victim of the great sacrifice, he remains calm and silent; he offers himself to his divine Father as a hostage for our reconciliation with heaven. He merits for the holy martyrs and the confessors of the faith that superhuman strength and courage which they are to manifest, in the course of ages, before tyrants and executioners.

APPLICATION

Let us pay homage to Jesus our divine Savior; let us adore him as king of martyrs; and let us beseech him, through what he suffered at the tribunal of Cai-phas, to give us the strength and courage necessary to

¹John x. 32.

persevere to the end in fulfilling the duties of our state.

Let the consideration of the perversity shown by his enemies inspire us with the greatest horror of all hypocrisy; let us always be frank and sincere; let us before God and men be what we ought to be. Let us guard against gratifying our personal resentment under pretence of furthering the interests of religion.

With the picture of the sorrows of Jesus before our eyes, let us excite ourselves more and more to gratitude to him who, being Son of God and equal to the Father, so devoted himself for us as to become the Victim of our redemption. Let us remember that he endures these pains only for our sakes, and to deliver us from the everlasting torments which we have deserved. Let us try, then, to understand better what he has done for our salvation, to make him a return of devotedness, and to give him love for love.

Let his example lead us to the practice of patience and mortification. Let us offer to God the Father some sacrifice in the course of this day, in union with what Jesus suffered at the tribunal of Caiphas: and to assure the fulfillment of our resolution, let us imagine that we see him in the presence of his enemies, patiently listening to their calumnies, and for our sake bearing all ill-treatment.

PRAYER

I behold thee, O Jesus, at the feet of Caiphas, and I see thee, the Pontiff of pontiffs, who art innocence and sanctity itself treated as a criminal! What confusion thou dost feel, O my God! Ah! what thought can be

more fit than this to confound my pride and susceptibility? I can bear nothing; and yet I call thee, who didst drain the chalice of humiliation to the dregs, my Master and Model.

I blush in thy presence for the inconsistency of my conduct, and I purpose for the future to act in a manner truly conformable to the example which thou hast given me. I will often recall it during this day, and if I have any thing to suffer, I will contemplate thee in the presence of thy enemies; and the desire of becoming by thy grace, like unto thee, being thereby excited in my heart, I will become patient in adversity and disposed to bear all things for thy sake.

Résumé, page 388.

Let us go in spirit into the grand council hall of the Jews.

1. There the Savior's enemies are assembled.
2. Their hearts are devoured by jealousy.
3. They wish him to be condemned to death.
4. Jesus is led into their presence.
5. All regard him with eyes full of hatred and animosity.

—O God, what a spectacle!

1. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, is loaded with shameful bonds.
2. The Judge of the living and the dead is cited before the tribunal of sinners.
3. Iniquity is about to pronounce sentence on innocence.
4. Under the forms of justice the most odious injustice is consummated.
5. Jesus Christ is here the chief of martyrs, meriting for those heroes of religion the grace to confess their faith before the tribunals of men.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION

JESUS RECEIVES A BLOW

One of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow.—
John xviii. 22.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior standing in the midst of the great council of the Jews, that assembly of proud Pharisees who regard him with contempt, who treat as a worthless creature, as a false prophet, and a seducer, the God by whom all subsists, the promised Messiah, who is holiness itself!

Let us admire him listening mildly and silently to his enemies. They put a multitude of questions to him for the purpose of ensnaring him, and so obtaining some ground for accusing and condemning him; but he does not see fit to answer them. Then the high-priest interrogates him on his disciples and his doctrine, flattering himself, says St. John Chrysostom, that he would find something reprehensible in his words, and thus be enabled to represent him as a seditious character and a dangerous innovator in matters of religion.¹

Our divine Master might remain silent, as he had done before; but he will not do so. He is now to give proof to all men that his doctrine is not a hidden doctrine. He answers calmly and mildly: "I have

¹Hom. 82.

spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in private I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them: behold, they know what things I have said.”¹

“One can imagine nothing,” says St. Augustine, “sweeter, more sensible, or more just than these words.” By them, Jesus makes known to all, that his teaching has always been public; that, consequently, he never feared to have it examined. By them he appeals to all people, even to his very enemies themselves. Furthermore, he could not have directly eulogized his own doctrine before those ill-disposed men who, as indeed they had already done, would have reproached him with giving testimony of himself.²

His answer was then eminently sensible; but those to whom it was addressed were exasperated because it was not favorable to their criminal design. It was the more vexatious to their pride because it was perfectly reasonable, and contained absolutely nothing for them to censure: hence their spite became visible on their faces, and their eyes expressed a desire of brutal revenge.

Then it was that an officer, or rather a vile slave, of the high-priest, entering into the intentions of the members of the council, drew near to Jesus, raised his sacrilegious hand, and struck him violently in the face, saying, “Answerest thou the high-priest so?”

“At sight of this outrage,” says St. Ephraim, “the heavens are dismayed, and the angels shudder with

¹John xviii. 20, 21.

²*Ibid.* xviii. 22.

horror." They are astonished that the earth does not open and swallow the wretch who has dared commit an act so barbarous, a sacrilege so horrible!

"O indignity! O affront!" exclaims St. Chrysostom; "can we imagine an outrage more grievous, an insult more revolting?" What! The King of glory is maltreated by a vile slave! The Son of God is struck by a base hireling! That august face before which the celestial spirits, unable to bear its splendor, veil themselves with their wings, is bruised by the hand of a wretched mortal! . . . And it is before the first of tribunals that this crime is committed with impunity, in presence of the high-priest of the law and by one of the people in his service!

If this wretch had struck one of his equals, he would have been most culpable; if he had struck an earthly sovereign, he would have been guilty of high treason, and would have incurred the full severity of the law. By what name, then, can we designate his crime, in daring to strike the Son of God himself, and what punishment can be adequate to such an insult?

But let us not be content with exciting our hearts to indignation against this sacrilegious servant and the members of the iniquitous tribunal which authorizes his crime; let us cast ourselves at the feet of our adorable Savior to make reparation to him. Let us also beg him to teach us why he suffered himself to be buffeted in a manner so cruel and so humiliating. We shall learn that he bore the outrage that we might conceive something of his grief and shame at the conduct of those who are ashamed of him and his religion, who refuse to acknowledge him as their God, and

to pay him the homage of their hearts. We shall learn that he endured it not only to expiate our pride and our sins of human respect, but also to excite us to follow him courageously in the way of humiliation, and to merit for us the grace to do so.

What an example he gives us when he presents his face to be buffeted, when he, who soon will offer his whole body to receive the blows of the executioners, now endures without complaint or murmur the greatest of all insults!

If he speaks, it is not to address reproaches to the wretch who has struck him, but to lead him to reflect upon his deed, and to excite him to salutary repentance. It is to give a useful lesson to the high priest and the other members of the Council. It is to prove that as a faithful observer of the law which he has come to accomplish, he has always given the example of the greatest respect towards the high-priest; that, having nowise deserved this punishment, he endures the blow for us, the true criminals, who, on account of our want of respect towards God, deserve to be treated with the greatest contempt for all eternity.

APPLICATION

Let us, then, understand the precious teachings which our divine Master gives us by his words and deeds. Let us learn of him that he is really meek and humble of heart, and beg of him the grace to imitate him, to suffer, like him and for his sake, every painful, annoying, and humiliating circumstance that may happen to us.

“By what right,” says St. Athanasius, “would we, sinners as we are, dare complain of the injustice of our brethren to us, when we see the Son of God, innocence itself, bear with so much patience, through love of us, the atrocious insults offered him by men?” No, no! Let us not be jealous of our fellow-beings who are esteemed; let us not be susceptible on the point of honor. If we would really be disciples of Jesus Christ, let us imitate his meekness, let us bear patiently and for his sake the injustice of those who, in common with us, have the nature of man, the condition of slave, the sad quality of sinner. Let us with our whole heart, thank our adorable Savior for having endured so great an insult in order to expiate our sins of pride, and to preserve us from the eternal confusion which we have deserved by our transgressions.

Let us be his, entirely his; and let us prove our fidelity by avoiding with the greatest care all that may be displeasing to him. Let us remember that every sin is an outrage infinitely more sensible to his tender heart than the blow that he received at the tribunal of Caiphas. Let us therefore sin no more; and let us, by our fidelity, atone for all the faults which we have had the misfortune to commit up to this day.

PRAYER

O most kind Jesus! who, far from turning away thy face from the wretch who strikes thee, dost regard him with eyes full of charity and dost offer him the kiss of reconciliation; neither turn away from me who have, alas! so cruelly struck thee by my sins. Look upon me in thy charity, and forgive me.

Grant also that, by thy grace, I may imitate thy meekness; that, walking in thy footsteps, I may for thy sake, accept with resignation all the humiliations which it may please thee to send me, and that I may never tolerate in my heart any other sentiments than those of patience, forgiveness of injuries, and submission to thy holy will.

Résumé, page 388.

Let us contemplate Jesus standing before his enemies who are assembled to judge him.

1. The high-priest interrogates him on his doctrine.

2. Jesus tells him that he had always taught publicly in the temple, and bids him ask those who had heard him.

3. This wise answer irritates his enemies.

4. One of the servants present raises his sacrilegious hand and strikes him on the face.

5. And no one in the council censures this odious deed!

—O Jesus! why dost thou suffer this? It is,

1. To teach us to suffer, and to suffer from all.

2. To teach us humility.

3. To expiate our sins of pride.

4. To save us from the eternal confusion which we have deserved by our sins.

5. To make us understand how sensitive thy divine Heart is to the outrages of our sins.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION

JESUS ACCUSED BY FALSE WITNESSES

The chief priests, and the whole council, sought false witness
against Jesus.—Matt. xxvi. 59.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider with horror to what a depth of wickedness the enemies of our divine Master have descended; they propose the most iniquitous of ends, they act on the most depraved sentiments, they employ the most unjust means.

The end which they have in view is to malign and put to death Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of kings; yet they know his sanctity and have received only benefits from his hands. It is to annihilate as far as possible his doctrine and his honor; it is to destroy the work of salvation which he came to accomplish. Can anything more criminal be conceived?

And why do they form this design? What motives but envy and jealousy, the basest of passions, can incite them to this? The devil has taken possession of their hearts; and therefore those malignant spirits fill them with their own hatred of him who is preëminently just, and with their own desire to see him humbled and put to death.

Impelled by these vicious sentiments, they employ the most odious means to attain their end. Already they

have called to their aid treachery, hypocrisy, and violence; now they have recourse to falsehood and perjury: "The chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put him to death."¹

Behold, then, the extraordinary spectacle of judges who, although obliged by their office to punish false witnesses, yet seek them out, incite them to come and perjure themselves, and not only promise them impunity, but even reward, if their deposition enables these unworthy magistrates to pass sentence of death on Jesus. What a subversion of all order! What incredible malice!

O iniquitous judges! you seek false witnesses, and why? Because truthful witnesses would not depose against him whose unjust condemnation you desire; because only the most audacious falsehood can incriminate him who is innocence and holiness itself; because you would fain give the greatest errors some semblance of truth; because you would veil under judicial forms the deicide which you are about to commit; because you would first by calumny kill in the estimation of men him for whose delivery to the executioners you are seeking a pretext; because the life of the Just One is displeasing to you, and you would fain persuade yourselves and others that he is not just.

Besides, your base act is written in the books of which you are interpreters: "Unjust witnesses have risen up against me,"² said David, the image of the Messiah; "but," he elsewhere adds, "let them be confounded and ashamed that seek my soul."³

¹Matt. xxvi. 59.

²Ps. xxvi. 12.

³Ps. xxxix. 15; lxix. 3.

Now, this is precisely what happens at the tribunal of Caiphas; the evidence, far from verifying any of the charges made against Jesus, only reveals the infamous plot laid by his enemies. Not one of his many calumniators can prove him guilty of even the slightest transgression. Many of them contradict what others have said; and so this whole intrigue results only in manifesting the innocence of the Accused and the malice of the enemies. "O triumph of the innocence of Jesus!" exclaims Origen; "amid all these suborned witnesses, calumny finds not even the slightest fault with which to charge him!"

At last two witnesses present themselves, and affirm that he said: "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and in three days to rebuild it."¹ This accusation was indeed grave, but it was also false; hence the Gospel styles those who made it, "false witnesses."

It was grave, because it was meant to ruin Jesus in the estimation of the Jews, who were so jealous of the glory of their temple that to speak against it was to speak against the nation itself, of which it was a symbol. Therefore in having Jesus accused of designing to destroy it, Caiphas took the most infallible means of exciting the prejudices of the people against the Victim of his envy.

But this accusation was false. Our divine Savior had said, speaking of his body, "Destroy this temple:"² but, distorting the meaning of his words, they affirm that he said, "I will destroy this temple." Thus, by a perfidious stratagem, they charge him with intending to com-

¹Matt. xxvi. 61.

²John ii. 19.

mit the sacrilege which the Jews themselves were soon to accomplish.

O perfidious judges! do you not reflect that you are already fulfilling the first part of his prophecy; since, in conspiring to take his life, you labor to destroy his adorable body, that living temple wherein "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead?"¹ Do you also reflect that he will accomplish the second part of his prophecy; that he will restore that temple after three days, and that it will be the sign of your condemnation and ruin, as well as the cause of his glory and the source of his triumph? But no! blinded by your passions, you think of nothing but carrying out your criminal design, to accomplish which you shrink not even from the crime of perjury.

Let us, who contemplate our God and Savior in the presence of his iniquitous judges consider him, listening in silence to the accusations of his enemies, without refuting the calumnies wherewith they brand him, not even that whereby they render him odious to the people.

It would have been easy for him to establish his innocence directly; for, had he wished it, the sick whom he had cured, the possessed whom he had delivered, the dead whom he had raised to life, the angels themselves, as well as the saints of the Old Law, would have come forward to say to all the people: "This is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God." But such is not his will: he consents to pass for a malefactor, in order to expiate our sins of pride and our inordinate desire for the esteem of men. As he stands before the tribunal of Caiphas, he is a picture of the most profound humiliation. He gives us at this moment a noble exam-

¹Col. ii. 9.

ple of patience and resignation; although his heart is breaking with grief at hearing the blasphemies of the infamous men who appear as witnesses against him, yet in the fullness of his charity, he thinks only of pitying them and praying for them.

APPLICATION

We profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ; let us, then, imitate him as perfectly as we can. In opposition to the conduct of his enemies, let us propose to ourselves none but meritorious ends; let us seek only the glory of God and the salvation of souls; let us act from motives of faith and charity; let us employ only legitimate means to attain our ends, remembering that we are not allowed to do the slightest evil, even to compass the greatest good.

Let us be on our guard lest through envy or any other motive, we examine the actions of others maliciously. Let us be persuaded that we would thereby imitate the guilty Jews, and bear false witness against our brethren, in order to put them to death in our own estimation.

Let us adore Jesus Christ, who, though holiness itself, is the victim of calumny, and opposes thereto only silence, resignation, and charity. Let us not be surprised if we chance to be the object of detraction; let us think only of bearing it as becomes true disciples of our divine Master.

PRAYER

Is there anything more admirable, O Jesus, than thy silence, whilst thy enemies calumniate thee, say all that

is evil of thee, misconstrue thy words, and utter blasphemies that fill thy soul with grief? Thou art as one deaf and dumb. And why, O Lord, dost thou act so? It is to teach me to bear with patience and resignation the contradictions, reproaches, malicious remarks, and false accusations which attack my reputation.

Give me, then, O my divine Master! thy spirit of meekness, that I may imitate thee in these trying circumstances, and that I may be truly the disciple of him whom I so often invoke in these words: "Jesus, hated, calumniated and persecuted, have mercy on us!"

Résumé, page 389.

Let us consider how criminal are the enemies of the Savior.

1. They conspire for the death of him who is innocence itself.

2. They are moved by the worst passions.

3. They have recourse to iniquitous measures.

4. They suborn false witnesses.

5. Two of these witnesses accuse Jesus of having spoken against the temple: an accusation, which though false, will ruin him in the estimation of the people. What iniquity!

—Let us, then, conduct ourselves very differently:

1. By proposing to ourselves only praiseworthy ends.

2. By acting only through pure motives.

3. By employing only legitimate means.

4. By adoring Jesus Christ, who, though sanctity itself, is exposed to calumny, which he refutes only by silence, resignation, and charity.

5. By regarding him as our model, especially when we are victims of detraction.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION ·

JESUS IS CONDEMNED AT THE TRIBUNAL OF CAIPHAS

What think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death.—Matt. xxvi. 66.

CONSIDERATION

The false witnesses have borne testimony against Jesus; he has heard their evidence without replying, for it is manifestly of no value. Nevertheless, Caiphas, desirous of turning it to account, interrogates him concerning it, but he remains silent. Then, becoming exasperated, and being determined to make him say something that might incriminate him, he exclaims: "Answerest thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee?"¹ Vain hope! Jesus answers nothing; what necessity was there for refuting testimony that was manifestly false, intrinsically valueless, and absolutely contradictory?

Caiphas and the doctors of the law, vexed to see all their diabolical expedients ineffectual, devised new stratagems to ensnare Jesus. Unhappy men! they did not understand that failure to accomplish a crime is a grace, and that if God permits nothing to prosper with them, it is because he wishes to open their eyes and bring them back to righteousness. But alas! instead of

¹Matt. xxvi. 62.

yielding to the evidence of facts, they again seek means of forcing the Savior to break this disconcerting silence. Then Caiphas conceives the plan of adjuring him in the name of the living God to tell whether he is truly the Messiah. He hopes that Jesus will not refuse to speak when formally commanded in the name of God and by the supreme pontiff himself.

This project was sacrilegious and supremely iniquitous, since it was using the holy name of God and the pontifical dignity as a means for the accomplishment of crime; and, in order to succeed, the questioner counted on the religious sentiment even of him whom he was about to put to death for his want of religion. He hoped to make the infinite respect of the Savior for the name of God the occasion of his ruin. Could anything be conceived more odious or more criminal?

Then the high-priest, rising, said to him in a tone of authority; "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God."¹ The summons could not be more solemn, nor could it be more perfidious. If Jesus, who says he is the Messiah, denies that he is God, he will be convicted of having deceived the people; if he answers in the affirmative, he will be accused of blasphemy. Therefore, unless he answer in an evasive manner, he will certainly furnish his executioners with a sword to immolate him. But he has no intention of evading the question. He will answer directly, because it is by the head of the nation, by the council of the ancients, by the whole people to whom he was first sent as ambassador, that he is summoned to declare plainly who he is; besides, he thinks it

¹Matt. xxvi. 63.

a duty to himself, to the Church, and to us, to declare openly on this occasion that he is the Messiah, the Son of God.

But first he shows that he is fully aware of the secret intentions of Caiphas, who interrogates him not indeed to know the truth, but merely to find an opportunity of condemning him. Wherefore he says to him and his attendants: "If I shall tell you, you will not believe me, . . . nor let me go,"¹ because I read in your hearts that you have resolved, not to admit the truth which I am about to reveal, but to combat it, and make the affirmation of it a crime. I am going to answer, nevertheless, not because of your summons, the malice of which I know, but out of reverence for God, in whose name you make it. Yes, you have said it, I am the Son of God.

O Jewish nation! behold he declares himself the Christ sent by God! "How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense?"² had been asked of him. The moment is now come when that suspense is to cease. The Son of Man, whom you have taken prisoner, loaded with chains, and seek to put to death, is the Messiah, the true Son of God.

O unhappy people! let not the state in which you see him, be to you an occasion of scandal. Listen rather to the words which he addresses to Caiphas and the whole assembly: "You shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven."³ Thus our divine Savior transports the thoughts of all from the unworthy tribunal before

¹Luke xxii. 67, 68.

²John x. 24

³Mark xiv. 62.

which he stands, to the judgment seat of God, where all injustice shall be repaired; he reveals himself as the supreme Arbiter who shall one day decide the fate of even his judges.

Jesus has declared that he is the Son of God, and he has done so to render homage to truth, to glorify his Father, and to edify his Church. He knows that it will cost him his life, but he has not hesitated. Let us then adore in him the King of martyrs appearing before the first persecutors, entering on the career in which he will be followed by millions of the faithful confessing in spite of the most rigorous torments and the most cruel death, that he is truly the Son of God.

As soon as Caiphas has heard the reply of Jesus, he makes a hypocritical show of indignation; he rends his garments, and cries out: "He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses?"¹ And the whole assembly decrees that Jesus is deserving of death.

O iniquitous sentence! Jesus is condemned because he has said: "I am the son of God." But before pronouncing against him, have his judges examined whether his wisdom is not divine, whether his works are not supernatural, whether his power has not been proved to be infinitely superior not only to that of men but also to that of hell? Have they opened the prophecies to study whether the Messiah is not to be in the state to which Jesus is reduced? The devils themselves have confessed his divinity;² and the people, the depositary of the promises concerning his coming, accuse him of blasphemy when they hear him proclaim that he is the Son of God!

¹Matt. xxvi. 65.

²Luke iv. 41.

Caiphas, the chief priests, and the doctors of the law, have the Messiah before them, and they refuse to acknowledge him. But, O judgment of God! by that criminal obstinacy, they cease to be the true interpreters of the law, which was given especially to make the Messiah known to men; the high priest, by rending his garments, signified his degradation and that of the other ministers of the Jewish religion, which was but a figure of the Christian faith. "At this moment," says St. Hilary, "the priesthood of Aaron ceases, and that of Jesus Christ is established; the law disappears before the Gospel; the veil of the Scriptures, figured by the sacerdotal garments, is rent before the majesty of the Christian religion."

APPLICATION

Let us by our words, and still more by our deeds, courageously confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that we believe in him, that we are really Christians; and, regardless of the troubles and persecutions that we may thereby draw upon ourselves, let us confess our faith when the glory of God and the good of our neighbor require it.

Let not the sight of our Savior's humiliation weaken our faith; let us bear in mind that he whom we have beheld weak, captive, and despised, is now glorious in heaven, whence he shall come to judge all mankind.

Let us be zealous in announcing to those who are in our charge, that Jesus is the Son of God, the worthy object of all our love, the foundation of all our hope.

Let us console ourselves for the ingratitude of men, if

we experience it; let it not even surprise us. Although Jesus had done good to all those with whom he came in contact, yet not one of the great council of the nation speaks in his behalf; all the members present in the assembly pronounce him deserving of death. Is it fitting that we should be treated better than our divine Master?

PRAYER

I bless thee, O Jesus, King of martyrs! who wast sacrificed by the Jews for having said, "I am the Son of God." They refused to acknowledge thee; but we, whom thou hast called to be Christians, and even religious, and to whom thou hast said those same words in the depths of our hearts, have believed them through thy grace and mercy. Increase in us, O sweet Savior, faith in thy divine teachings and hope in thy promises; that, animated by the most ardent charity, we may be numbered among thy friends on the day of thy glorious coming in the clouds of heaven, when thou shalt exercise all justice, and reward in person all those who shall have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.

Résumé, page 389.

Let us consider Jesus before the tribunal of Caiphas.

1. Though unjustly accused he remains silent.
2. He thereby disconcerts his enemies.
3. Then the high-priest adjures him, in the name of God, to tell if he is the Christ.
4. Jesus declares that he is the Son of God, and adds:
"Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, coming in the clouds of heaven."

5. On hearing these words, they accuse him of blasphemy, and cry out, "He is guilty of death."

—O iniquitous sentence!

1. The Holy of holies is judged worthy of death.

2. The Messiah, so long desired by men, is rejected.

3. He is rejected by the very people whom he had made the depositary of his promises.

4. What a misfortune for the Jews to disown him!

5. Is not that misfortune likewise ours? Does our conduct show that we acknowledge Jesus to be Son of God?

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS ABUSED AND INSULTED IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS

They did spit in his face, and buffet him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands.—Matt. xxvi. 67.

CONSIDERATION

Caiphas, and the council over which he presides, have decreed Jesus worthy of death. After agreeing to assemble again at dawn, to follow up the affair, they retire to take some hours' rest, leaving servants to keep guard over the innocent Victim of their envy. These hirelings know the dispositions of their masters too well to content themselves with guarding Jesus: they propose to have some amusement at his expense. Certain of impunity, or rather, counting on the approbation of Caiphas, they carry out their intention, and lead Jesus into the vestibule, where they make him undergo all that the malice of their hearts can suggest, all that insolence and cruelty together can effect.

O what a sight! The Master of heaven is made a pastime for wretches! He whom the angels adore in holy fear, is the butt of low and cruel pleasantry! Who can tell what the Savior endures? These new Philistines torment in a thousand ways the true Samson delivered into their hands by the synagogue; they fulfilled what had been foretold of the Messiah by the prophet Jere-

miah, saying: "He shall give his cheek to him that striketh him; he shall be filled with reproaches."¹

They first insult him by words, treat him as a dolt and a fool, renew the accusations of the false witnesses, and belch forth all sorts of blasphemy and imprecation against him. Then they spit in his face, thus accomplishing what he had foretold by Isaias, saying: "I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me,"² and what he had himself prophesied to his apostles.³ What torture! Can we conceive greater contempt, more outrageous insult, or more humiliating treatment?

O adorable face of my Jesus, brightness of eternal light, mirror of God's majesty, object of Mary's contemplation, joy and happiness of the angels, I see thee defiled with spittle and subjected to the greatest indignity! O mystery of iniquity indeed on the part of men, but of love on the part of Jesus, who offers this excess of humiliation for our salvation!

The people to whom in his goodness he has delivered himself for us, obeying the inspirations of the devil, continue to exercise upon him all the cruelties suggested by their hatred and envy. Speaking by the prophet Isaias, the Son of God had said: "I have given my body to the strikers and my cheeks to them that plucked them."⁴ He now suffers the torture which he had foretold. The wretches to whom he is abandoned, dare lay sacrilegious hands upon him. They strike him rudely, then burst into peals of derisive laughter; they slap and buffet him, they pull his hair and his beard.

¹Lament. iii. 30

²Isai. i. 6

³Mark x. 34.

⁴Isai. i. 6.

Let us contemplate, with throbbing hearts and tearful eyes, the barbarous sport of those cruel men. Let us behold each soldier, each servant, as he torments the divine Victim, pays him his tribute of contempt and ill usage, and tries to outdo the others in inflicting insult and outrage.

The Christ of God, the eternal priest, is made the butt of ruffians! Insult without measure is heaped upon him. Never was any creature, however vile, treated with so much ignominy as is the Master of the world in this dark hour. And yet he is consumed with love for those even who outrage him. "He looks upon them," says St. Chrysostom, "so mildly and so affectionately that their hearts should have been melted." But these wretches put a bandage over his eyes, and so guard against yielding to any feeling of compassion.

In their impious audacity, they scoff at his character of prophet, and show that they consider him an impostor. After surrounding him, some of them strike him, saying: "Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck thee?"¹ Great God, to what abasement is thine adorable Son reduced! He from whom nothing is hidden, is ordered to guess who struck him! The name of Christ is given him only in sacrilegious mockery!

Although you who insult him cruelly, do not believe in him, yet your very insults have borne witness to his divinity, since he had foretold them. Did he not say by the mouth of David: "I am the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people; all they that saw me have laughed me to scorn?"² Did he not say by his servant

¹Matt. xxvi. 68.

²Ps. xxi. 7, 8.

Job: "They have struck me on the cheek; they are filled with my pains?"¹

You are urged on, it is true, by the hatred of the Pharisees and the rage of hell; and, nevertheless, you are concurring in the accomplishment of his merciful designs. Yes, it is his mercy and his love for us that have reduced him to the ignominious state in which we contemplate him. If we were really convinced of this, would we not love him with our whole heart? Would we not be animated with the liveliest and most constant gratitude to him?

APPLICATION

Let us love Jesus who has so loved us as even to sacrifice for us his honor and his life. If he endures all kinds of opprobrium, it is to expiate our sins, which are so many acts of contempt of God or of his adorable person and his holy doctrine. Let us hate sin, and avoid it. Let us bear in mind that sin is an outrage infinitely more painful to the divine heart of Jesus than was the cruel mockery of the satellites of Caiphas. Let us therefore, deplore our past transgressions; let us make a firm purpose never more to commit them, and let us take the necessary means to fulfill our resolutions.

Let us attach ourselves with our whole soul to our generous Redeemer, remembering that he humbled himself even to annihilation, to deliver us from the everlasting disgrace which we had merited.

Let us learn from his example to bear injuries and to practise patience, humility, and self-sacrifice. Since we

¹Job xvi. 11.

are his disciples, let us imitate him. When at times we are discouraged on account of a humiliation or contradiction, let us compare what we have to suffer with what he suffered for us, and then blush for shame at sharing so little in the bitter cup which he drained for our sake to the very dregs.

After considering him filled with reproaches, covered with ignominy, and given up to all sorts of torments, can we desire to be honored by men? can we love glory? can we even seek our own ease and the gratification of our sensuality? No, no! After such consideration we should have but one desire, that of making ourselves like our divine Master.

Let us often make reparation for the outrages which he suffered during his passion, and especially for those which he experienced on account of our sins. Let us as far as possible atone for the blasphemies of the Jews against him and for those which in our own day are uttered by the impious.

Let us gather as another fruit of this meditation unvarying respect for our neighbor, avoiding everything that might be uncharitable towards him—for in the eyes of faith, our neighbor is Jesus Christ: to insult, mock, and despise him, is to insult, mock, and despise, our divine Savior himself.

PRAYER

O Jesus! equally adorable among the Jews, who insult and abuse thee, and in heaven, where the angels prostrate themselves in thy presence, we bless thee for thy patience in suffering, and for the love which made thee

endure so much contempt, in order to merit for us the grace to adore thee one day in glory.

Vouchsafe, O my Jesus! to hear my prayer. Since thou turnest not away thy face from an ungrateful people who dishonor thee, turn it not away from a sinner who also has often outraged thee, but who at this moment has no other desire than that of venerating thee as profoundly as do the angels in heaven, and who now urgently implores thy grace!

Résumé, page 390.

The chief priests, after having judged Christ worthy of death, retired, leaving the adorable Victim to the mercy of the soldiers and servants. O God! what a scene!

1. The menials utter insulting words.
 2. They spit in his face.
 3. They strike him with their fists.
 4. They pull his beard, they drag him ignominiously.
 5. They turn his prophetic character into derision.
- The servants bandage his eyes; then, buffeting him, they say: "Prophecy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck thee?" And Jesus endures these outrages!

—It is because he wants,

1. To expiate our sins, which are truly a contempt of God.
2. To make us hate and avoid them.
3. To save us from being one day exposed to the contempt and insults of the devil.
4. To teach us to suffer injuries.
5. To teach us patience, humility, and abnegation.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION

ST. PETER'S DENIAL

Even this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.—Mark xiv. 30.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider with terror the frightful fall of the prince of the apostles, who, as Jesus had foretold, three times denies his divine Master. After supper, when instituting the adorable sacrament of his body, our divine Savior said to him: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."¹ "Simon Peter saith to him: 'Lord, whither goest thou?' Jesus answered: 'Whither I go thou canst not follow me; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.' Peter saith to him: 'Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee.' Jesus answered him: 'Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Amen, amen, I say to thee, the cock shall not crow till thou deny me thrice.'"²

Addressing all the apostles, he said: "All you shall be scandalized in me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed.' . . . 'Though all men shall be scan-

¹Luke xxii. 31, 32.

²John xiii. 36-38.

dalized in thee,' Peter answered, 'I will never be scandalized.'"¹ Jesus repeats his prediction; but Peter replies again: "Lord I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death."² Insisting still more, he says: "Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee."³

In the Gården of Olives, Jesus had recommended his apostles, and particularly St. Peter, to watch and pray that they might not enter into temptation, reminding them that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. The presumptuous apostle, who had protested his fidelity with so much energy, refuses to believe that he can ever disown his divine Master; and, therefore, he neglects to seek in prayer the necessary strength to be faithful. God abandons him to his apparent courage, which is really weakness: he leaves him to his own resources which inevitably fail him in the moment of trial; for, without the assistance of grace, man has only the power of ruining himself.

Jesus is soon apprehended by his enemies. Peter at first takes up his defence and strikes one of the high-priest's followers, then he flees with the other apostles. It is true, he soon returns; but how unlike his former self he is! "Generous as he had been in promises," says St. Augustine, "just so timid does he show himself now that danger has come;" he follows Jesus *afar off*, as the Gospel remarks. It is, therefore, with an irresolute and fear-stricken heart that he reaches the house of Caiphas. He goes in without suspecting the danger that he is to encounter; he takes no precaution

¹Matt. xxvi. 31, 33.

²Luke xxii. 33.

³Matt. xxvi. 35.

against it; but sitting down with the servants and the officers near the fire that has been made, he warms himself while awaiting the issue of the trial.

A maid-servant looks at him attentively, and thinks that she recognizes him. "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?"¹ she asks. "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth."² These words confound him; his courage forsakes him. "Woman," he replies, speaking loud enough to be heard by all, "I know him not."³ "I neither know nor understand what thou sayest."⁴

O weakness, cowardice, and falsehood! Of what is man not capable when abandoned to himself! . . . O Jesus, how this denial must have pierced thy tender heart! Thou hadst given Peter so many marks of special affection! Thou hadst distinguished him amongst all thy disciples, thou hadst chosen him for the head of thy Church; and thou seest him, alas! succumb to the first trial, deny thee and apostatize at the voice of a maid-servant. Who can tell the greatness of thy sufferings and the ardor of thy desire for the immediate flight of thy apostle from this occasion of sin!

But Peter still remains in the vestibule; alas! a moment after, he denies his Master a second time and confirms his words with an oath; then, a little later, for the third time, and with an imprecation he swears that he knows not the man.

O how quickly we go down into the depths of evil! Peter, who is now perjured, was at first only presumptuous, and negligent in praying. Then he showed

¹John xviii. 17.

²Mark xiv. 67.

³Luke xxii. 57.

⁴Mark xiv. 68.

himself cowardly in following Jesus; then rash in thrusting himself into the occasion of sin. When the moment of trial has come, he feels his vaunted courage ebbing, and he begins to be ashamed of his Master; he even declares that he does not know him, nay, that he never knew him. Then, not content with mere denial, he has recourse to swearing; in order to deceive more effectually, he takes care not to mention the name of him whom he denies: "I know not this man of whom you speak."¹

O Peter, what sayest thou? thou knowest not the man? And he is thy Redeemer, thy Savior, thy God! Thou knowest not the man? Thou hast, then, forgotten thine own words; thou dost no longer remember the testimony which thou didst bear him, saying, in the name of all the disciples: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God;"² . . . thou hast the words of eternal life!"³

Thou knowest not the man? But it was he that made thee walk on the waters, that held out his hand to save thee from being engulfed in the waves; that made thee take that miraculous draught of fish which filled with awe both thyself and those who were with thee. It was he that at thy request cured thy mother-in-law; that appeared to thee radiant with glory on Thabor when the Eternal Father said to thee, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"⁴ This is the divine Master that has loved thee so much! Why should he have to suffer this outrage from thee?

¹Mark xiv. 71.

²Matt. xvi. 16.

³John vi. 69.

⁴Matt. xvii. 5.

Let us not be content with deploring the fall of the prince of the apostles; let us draw a useful lesson therefrom. And first, let us be convinced that of ourselves we are nothing but weakness, and that what happened to St. Peter may more easily befall us. Let us, therefore, guard against presumption; let us fear for ourselves: if the just fall, is it not folly for sinners to rely on themselves?

Peter fell because he neglected to watch and pray: let us learn from this what power the temptations of the devil have over the tepid religious who neglects prayer and vigilance.

Peter fell because he kept company with the wicked; let us therefore shun the world, and avoid those persons who would separate us from God; let us dwell in retirement, and even detach ourselves, as far as possible, from those of our Brothers who may not be regular. Human respect is a terrible weapon which every day slays thousands.

The head of the Church fell because he imprudently went into the occasion of sin: what precautions should not be ours who are frail reeds, shaken by the first breath of temptation!

Let us, then, withdraw promptly from all that might tend to our spiritual ruin, or that might even lessen our moral strength. Let us be convinced that he who exposes himself to danger, shall perish therein; for on such occasions his mind is disturbed, his heart enervated, while the temptation grows stronger and stronger, until at last he gives way. Alas! how many times has not this been our experience!

PRAYER

O my God, I know that of himself man has neither light to know the truth, nor strength to practise virtue; that if he is abandoned to his own resources, he is sure to perish. Therefore I have recourse to thee, and I beseech thee not to leave me to myself. In thy presence I deplore all the error of my ways, and I beg of thee, through the intercession of the prince of the apostles, the two graces which thou didst bestow on him—that of offending thee no more, and that of bewailing my sins until mine eyes shall be closed to the light of time and open to that of eternity.

Résumé, page 390.

Let us meditate on St. Peter's fall:

1. Jesus had foretold it to him.
2. He had exhorted him to watch and pray.
3. The moment of trial comes. Peter follows his divine Master, but only at a distance.
4. He enters into the house of the high-priest, where he imprudently joins a group of officers and servants.
5. Very soon, alas! he thrice denies that divine Master to whom he had said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

What grief he causes the Heart of Jesus!

Let us learn from the misfortune of the prince of the apostles:

1. To distrust ourselves.
2. To humble ourselves profoundly at the thought of our weakness.
3. To watch and pray.
4. To heed the first reproaches of our conscience.
5. To shun resolutely every occasion of sin.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION

CONVERSION AND PENANCE OF ST. PETER

Immediately, . . . the cock crew. And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter. . . . And Peter went out and wept bitterly.
—Luke xxii. 60-62.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider with fear and trembling into what an abyss the prince of the apostles fell. He who had been admitted to the contemplation of the greatest mysteries, honored with the most intimate confidence, and loved with the most tender affection by Jesus, is now ashamed to own him as his Master. After having, by a revelation from heaven, clearly recognized and confessed him to be Christ, the Son of the living God, now he denies him as though his adorable Savior had been the vilest of men! O what scandal for the other disciples! What a triumph for the Jews! Alas! who would have thought such faithlessness possible? But let us consider with the liveliest emotions the infinite goodness of Jesus towards him. The abyss of Peter's sin has indeed called on the abyss of divine mercy.

The crowing of the cock is heard, but it has no effect on St. Peter. It is heard again, after his third denial, and then the apostle remembers what had been foretold him, but he is not yet converted: that requires a special and very powerful grace, which Jesus, in his

mercy, grants him. "The Lord turning, looked on Peter."¹

In these words is contained the whole history of the mercy of God; that look of kindness which they recall, is the light which shows Peter the precipice down which he has fallen; it is the hand of the charitable guide who leads him back to the way from which he had wandered. That look of Jesus is a look not of disdain, but of love and compassion.

O Peter! Jesus loves thee still, although thou hast denied him, and hast outraged him more grievously than did Caiphas and his officers. He loves thee and therefore turns to thee with that look which penetrates into the very hearts of men and is for thee the grace to which thou wilt owe thy salvation.

This look changes the sinful Peter into Peter repentant; it is a mirror wherein he perceives his shameful condition of defilement by sin. By that look, Jesus says to him: "And thou, too, Simon, son of John, thou deniest and insultest me!" By that look, he shows him his divine heart, broken with sorrow and pierced with many swords, amongst which Peter recognizes that wherewith he himself has wounded him.

He then comprehends the enormity of his crime; but he also realizes that his divine Savior loves him still and calls him to his service. He is humbled by his sin and yet sustained by grace; desolate, yet confident; ashamed, yet eager to return to him whom he has had the misfortune to offend: dead through pride and presumption, he is raised to life again by the compassionate look of his Savior.

¹Luke xxii. 61.

Jesus looked on Peter, "and Peter went out, and wept bitterly."¹ Such are the effects of grace on sinners who, like St. Peter, try to correspond with it, who bewail their faults, and withdraw quickly from dangerous occasions. Peter hastens to flee from the house which has been so fatal to him, waiting till it please God to furnish him with the means of repairing later, the scandal that he has given. He departs quickly from the occasion of sin, thus performing an act of eminent wisdom, an act with which every sincere conversion ought to begin.

But Peter does not stop there: giving up his heart to sorrow for his faults, he sheds torrents of tears. O flow in abundance, tears of that illustrious penitent! you are the saving water which purifies him and restores to his soul its former beauty; it is through you that he is entitled to God's mercy and the esteem of men.

St. Peter's tears call forth tears of compassion from thee, O Jesus! and thy compassion is a sign that thou hast forgotten his fault, pardoned his crime, re-instated him in his privileges and given him a place in thy generous and loving heart. Thou rejectest not a contrite heart which returns to thee, especially when it bears such marks of conversion as those on which we are meditating.

St. Peter's conversion is prompt: at the first look of Jesus, he enters into himself, deploras his misfortune, and at once repents of his crime. His conversion is prudent: he hastens from the occasion of sin, from the company of those who have led him into evil. His

¹Luke xxii. 62.

conversion is sincere; tears flow from his eyes, but they have their source in sorrow of heart. He says nothing, because great grief is always silent; but his tears are more eloquent than words, and are as efficacious as a new baptism would be. His sorrow is lasting: evermore penetrated with confusion, he ceases not to bewail his sin. St. Clement attests that he rose every morning at cock-crow to weep for his infidelity and to ask pardon of Jesus Christ, a mortification that he continued for the rest of his life. His sorrow was so great and so persevering, that, according to Nicephorus, his tears furrowed his cheeks.

His conversion is fervent:—"He is moved to tears," says St. Chrysostom, "not through fear of the punishment which he has deserved, but through regret for having offended his God, for having denied his adorable Master, for whom he has so lively an affection." His heart is filled with sorrow and love. Sorrow inspires him with contrition for his sin, and makes him endure a martyrdom more painful, perhaps, than the martyrdom of blood which he will one day suffer; love excites confidence, obtains for him the assistance of grace, and makes him find ineffable consolation even in his tears.

APPLICATION

We, like St. Peter, have had the misfortune of offending Jesus, and we, too, have met the Savior's look of love and pity. But have we, like the prince of the apostles, corresponded to the favor bestowed upon us? Have we hastened to leave the occasions of sin? Have

we kept our faults before our eyes, to be the subject of our confusion? Have we wept over them sincerely and constantly? Have we wept, and do we still weep, for them from a motive of love? Are our tears abundant? St. Peter fell but once, and he wept over his misfortune all his lifetime: can we who have many times fallen so grievously, cease to mourn? “Come, let us weep before the Lord that made us,”¹ let us weep always, because it will never cease to be true that we have offended our Father and Friend.

O how the tears of St. Peter, his profound sorrow, his sincere conversion, his lasting repentance, condemn our superficial sorrow, our imperfect conversion, our defective penance, our momentary sighs and tears!

Let us, then, enter seriously into ourselves, and excite ourselves to true contrition; let us have recourse to him whom we have offended. Our sins are our own work; but repentance comes from grace if we co-operate therewith. Let us ask with fervor for that grace which will lead us back to God through the way of sorrow, after we have strayed from him into the way of unfaithfulness.

PRAYER

Behold me in thy presence, O Jesus! confused and humbled at the sight of my sins. I know that thou hast looked upon me with that saving look wherewith thou didst convert St. Peter; thou hast reproached me with my wanderings, and hast called me back to thee by repentance. But how have I corresponded to that

¹Ps. xciv. 6.

grace? After imitating thy apostle in his sin, have I imitated him in his repentance? Has my conversion the same marks as his? Is it sincere, efficacious, and persevering? Is it inspired by love rather than by fear? I know not, my God! but thou who knowest all things dost know.

If at this moment I am not wholly thine, if sin yet dwells within me, look on me again, I beseech thee, with love and pity; and may that look be to my heart the source of the most abundant graces, and to my eyes an inexhaustible fountain of tears. Through the merits of thy precious blood, my tears shall make thee not only forget my iniquities but also re-instate me in thy friendship and in the privileges of thy children.

Résumé, page 391.

Into what an abyss the prince of the apostles fell when he thrice denied his divine Master!

1. But Jesus looks upon him.
2. Immediately St. Peter acknowledges his fault.
3. He repents, he begins to weep for his sin.
4. He goes quickly out of the house of Caiphas.
5. He does penance the rest of his days.

—We too have sinned, and doubtless more grievously than Saint Peter; let our conversion, then, like his, be

1. Prompt, beginning this very moment.
2. Sincere, enabling us to quit sin and its occasions.
3. Persevering, leading us to attach ourselves to God forever.
4. Fervent, disposing us to embrace with courage the practice of virtue.
5. Pure, prompted by worthy motives.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION

JESUS SHUT UP IN A DUNGEON

They humbled his feet in fetters; the iron pierced his soul.
—Ps. civ. 18.

CONSIDERATION

St. Bonaventure and several other Fathers of the Church, assert that the soldiers and the servants of the high-priest, tired at last of tormenting Jesus, and wishing to take some rest, agreed to bind him hand and foot, and to shut him up in a dark and narrow dungeon near the high-priest's hall of audience.

Let us, then, contemplate our beloved Savior suffering this new indignity, and, as far as possible, let us fathom the ocean of grief in which his soul is plunged. Let us behold him in the hands of the ruffians who have cruelly mocked him, who have heaped upon him all the outrages that malice could suggest, and who have wreaked their infernal fury upon his adorable person. For a moment they pause, but they immediately return to him: they bind him tightly, they drag him to the prison, the door of which they open; they thrust him violently into that hideous den, which is so low and so narrow that in it he can neither stand erect nor lie down.

There it is that our adorable Savior, exhausted with

fatigue, and overwhelmed with grief, passes the rest of that night, waiting for the great council to confirm the sentence already pronounced, and to deliver him into the hands of the governor.

O Jesus, my dear Lord, why do thy enemies add this new outrage? The most Just of men is imprisoned like a criminal; the Holy of holies, the Master of the world is confined within the walls of a narrow dungeon; space is measured out to him who has created worlds, and who has immensity for an attribute! What a mystery of iniquity! what a subversion of all order!

Behold, Christian souls, the state of your adorable Master: his body is bruised, his face is covered with spittle, his forehead is bedewed with a cold sweat. He is weak, exhausted, almost dying. He is in extreme need of charitable assistance, but no one gives it. He is a prisoner, and no one visits him. His heart is sad and desolate, and no word consoles him, no hand dries his tears. He is chained in a dark cell, where he cannot even lie on the ground. This is the bed of rest which the synagogue has prepared for him! Ah! could he, the King who came to her full of goodness and meekness, who, as she herself has acknowledged and proclaimed on many occasions, is really her sovereign Lord, would he have expected to be treated thus by the daughter of Sion! O criminal injustice! He has come to his kingdom, and his own subjects have given him a prison for his palace; they are even waiting for an opportunity to enthrone him on an ignominious cross!

But, dearest Lord! art thou not the all-powerful

God? Why, then, dost thou allow thyself to be thrust into that narrow dungeon? Why dost thou, who art holiness itself, suffer thyself to be treated as a malefactor? At this very moment men and beasts are resting after the labors of the day, and repairing their strength by sleep—why dost thou not rest? why dost thou continue to suffer?

I understand now, my dear Savior. Through love for us, thou art now negotiating our interests with thy Father; thou art expiating the sins that we have committed through an abuse of our liberty; thou art satisfying for those crimes for which we deserve to be bound, hand and foot, and cast into that eternal prison, where there are only weeping and gnashing of teeth, devouring flames and cries of despair. Thou art meriting for the martyrs and the confessors of the faith the grace to bear patiently the pains and the weariness of prison, and to remain faithful to thy holy law unto death; thou showest thyself to be their chief and model, and thou givest them the most powerful motives for consolation. Their imprisonment shall appear mild and their chains light, when they remember that thou hast deigned to be imprisoned and loaded with irons for their sakes.

Thou also givest us an example of the greatest resignation and the most generous forgetfulness of injuries; thou dost in the seclusion of thy prison what thou shalt soon do publicly on the cross, thou prayest even for those who persecute thee so cruelly and so maliciously, and already thou sayest: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹

¹Luke xxiii. 34.

APPLICATION

After contemplating our divine Master in such pain and suffering, can we henceforth complain of wanting anything, of being ill lodged or ill provided for? If every evening at our bedside we called to mind the resting place which the Jews gave Jesus, would not we, wretched sinners as we are, be ashamed at seeing ourselves infinitely better treated than he was? Would not the thought that he was imprisoned for our sakes, make it easy for us to bear the contradictions, injuries, and persecutions, of which we may be the object?

The God of all might and of all holiness, in order to deliver us from everlasting imprisonment, consents to be chained and cast into a loathsome dungeon; and we, who call him our Master—we would fain suffer nothing, we would murmur at the least trial! Oh! how unworthy we are of that name of Christian, which it is an honor for us to bear!

Jesus dwells in our hearts, especially when we have the happiness of receiving holy Communion; but is he not there as in a prison, hindered by our indifference, our self-love, and our tepidity, from acting freely to effect our sanctification, and to inspire us with generosity in his service? Is not his grace, his word, imprisoned within us, and reduced to impotence by our perverse or irresolute will?

Jesus was cast into prison, and while there, he was either forgotten or insulted by the world; but does not the same thing happen even now? Behold him in the tabernacle, bound by indissoluble chains of love,

and outwardly reduced to the most absolute impotence. There in the august Sacrament which he instituted on the eve of his death, he is, alas! forgotten by the greater number of men, and even outraged by many. What a subject of sorrow for all loyal hearts! what a motive for prostrating ourselves before him to make him honorable reparation!

PRAYER

Permit us to cast ourselves at thy feet, august Prisoner! who, in thy infinite love, hast shut thyself up in our tabernacles; yes, permit us to offer thee the homage of our hearts. The world ignores or even insults thee, in the sacrament of thy love; but we, thy children and privileged disciples, bless thee and pray thee to accept, in reparation for their indifference, our most tender affection and our protestations of fidelity. Help us, O Lord! to give thee love for love, and, by conduct worthy of our vocation, to make thee forget all that thou hast suffered from our sin, and especially this torment of thy imprisonment, which thou didst endure on account of our abuse of liberty.

O Jesus, who for us hast satisfied the justice of thy Father, be thou ever blessed for making thyself a slave to procure for us the liberty of thy children, and grant that we may not lose it by sin.

O Mary! by thy anguish during that night which Jesus spent in a dungeon, we conjure thee to obtain for us the grace of never more offending thy divine Son, whom we desire to praise, love, bless, and glorify for ever!

Résumé, page 391.

St. Bonaventure and several other Fathers assure us that the servants of the high-priest, when tired of tormenting Jesus, shut him up in a small dungeon, near the audience chamber.

Jesus is in prison.

1. What a crime!
2. What a disorder!
3. What humiliation for our divine Master!
4. What inexpressible sufferings he endured in that ignominious den!

5. He remains there till daybreak.

—Let us reflect that he chooses to suffer this pain:

1. To expiate our sins, by which we abuse our liberty.
2. To deliver us from eternal imprisonment, the just punishment of our sins.
3. To merit for the martyrs and confessors of the faith the grace to brave, for religion, the sufferings of prison and exile.

4. To teach us patience and mortification.

5. To testify his love to us, for it was love that made him captive, as it is still his love which holds him prisoner in the Blessed Sacrament.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION

JESUS IS BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE

They brought him bound, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.—Matt. xxvii. 2.

CONSIDERATION

The last night of Jesus on earth in his passable state is ended—that memorable night on which he instituted the Sacrament of his love, and gave to men the most salutary teachings; that sorrowful night when the powers of darkness being loosed against him treated him with the most revolting cruelty.

The day dawns, the day of the greatest sufferings and of the death of the Man-God. All the torments which he has hitherto suffered are not only to be renewed in the most humiliating manner but to be multiplied in number and intensity. Jews and Gentiles, priests and magistrates, all are to concur in aggravating his sufferings.

The chief priests being unable, of themselves, to execute the sentence of death which they had passed on Jesus, hasten in the morning to assemble at the house of Caiphas, to secure its confirmation by Pontius Pilate. These unhappy men, understanding perfectly that the charge brought by the witnesses whom they had suborned, would not produce the desired effect on the governor's mind, agreed to bring Jesus before him as a seditious character, an enemy of Cæsar, an aspirant for royalty,

seeking to form a party for himself among the people.

O base perfidy of the chiefs of the synagogue! To incriminate Jesus in the eyes of his fellow-citizens, they charge him with religious misdemeanors; they falsely accuse him of speaking ill of the law and the Temple; and to have him condemned to death by Pilate, they propose to accuse him of being a seditious person and a disturber of public order, of seeking to be made king, and, finally of forbidding the payment of tribute to Cæsar! Thus it is that they change the ground of their calumnies at will.

They hope to move the governor not only to confirm the decree already pronounced but even to give a new sentence of death. This by emanating from Roman authority alone would secure them against odium, and by condemning Jesus to crucifixion, would deprive him of all honor and esteem in the eyes of the people.

Such are the motives which animate the Jews—criminal, odious, iniquitous motives, revealing souls wholly under the influence of the spirit of evil. But let us turn our minds from these motives to those which prompted our divine Savior's acts. He also has reasons for being brought before Pilate's tribunal. Savior of all men, he wills that Jews and Gentiles concur in immolating him; in his infinite love he desires to suffer outrages from all nations, and to die the kind of death that he announced when he said, "They . . . shall deliver him to the Gentiles. . . . to be crucified.¹ . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."² Thus he makes the cruelty and the malice of the Jews serve the execution of his designs.

¹Matt. xx, 19.

²John xii, 32.

Let us then, contemplate, our dear Redeemer, led once more through the streets of Jerusalem, tightly bound, surrounded with armed men, preceded by the chief priests and the doctors of the law and followed by a mob, who look upon him as a blasphemer, an enemy of their nation and their temple. Calumny has turned every heart from him: hence his enemies no longer fear to take him in the open day, being assured that, now that he has become odious to the people, no popular sympathy will be manifested in his behalf.

O how humiliating and shameful is this journey! He is dragged with a cord around his neck along the streets of Jerusalem, every stone of which had witnessed his miracles. The people who had so often greeted him with acclamation, and who, a few days before, sang his praises, now outrage him and clamor for his death; those who are near him insult him and curse him to render him more contemptible in the eyes of others. As the crowd increases, it adds fuel to its fury against him and it multiplies all kinds of outrage of his person.

Behold, Christian souls, the state to which your Savior is reduced! He is truly the "man of sorrows,"¹ "the outcast of the people,"² the object of their derision; he is truly the divine Lamb, which, though abandoned to the fury of wolves, yet remains ever meek and gentle. Bear him company, then, in this ignominious journey, and by your respectful homage, by your sincere adoration, try to make amends for the insults and outrages to which he is subject, and which, indeed, he suffers only for your sakes, and because he wills to suffer them. Do not be content with contemplating his trials, his sufferings, and

¹Isai. liii. 3.

²Ps. xxi. 7.

his exterior humiliations; but reflect that it is for you that he has been reduced to this state. Enter, then, into his heart; see not only his anguish and dejection but also the resignation with which he supports his sufferings, and the charity which he entertains for his enemies. They all curse him, as they drag him before the governor's tribunal; but his only answer is to offer up his sufferings to his Father for them, and pray him to forgive them.

APPLICATION

Let us excite in our hearts lively sentiments of compassion, while considering what Jesus suffers for us. Can we remain cold, unmoved and insensible, at the sight of so many sorrows? Can the sight of our beloved Savior, buffeted, despised, and rejected by all his people, fail to touch our souls to the quick? Why, then, should we show so little love for our divine Redeemer? Let us make him honorable amends for all that he suffered in the streets of Jerusalem; let us try to glorify him now as much as he was then despised.

Let us adore the terrible judgments of God, which are executed on their nation by the Jews themselves. The divine Word has come to them, full of grace and truth; he has come to be their life, their salvation, and their glory; and they contemptuously reject him and give him up to idolaters, without suspecting that their act is suicidal since it surrenders to a foreign people the right to the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Let the thought of Jesus dragged through Jerusalem,

occupy our minds when we pass through the streets of the city where we are employed, and keep us modest. Let us willingly bear contempt and insults. What are these if compared with the affronts and the ill treatment which Jesus, our head and model, endured for us? Would not our shrinking from them prove that we were ashamed to resemble him? and that we refused to be his disciples?

Let the thought of Jesus humbled and annihilated, lead us to the practice of humility. Alas! we are always afraid of being despised and condemned by men. But is this the feeling that should animate us? As Christians we should fear nothing but that we may not be found conformable to Jesus; and we ought to esteem nothing more than what may help us to become like our divine Model.

PRAYER

O Jesus! whom I contemplate dragged ignominiously through the streets of Jerusalem, grant me the grace to enter into the spirit of this mystery, which is one of love on thy part and of iniquity on that of thine enemies. Grant that, understanding how much thou hast loved us, I may love thee, in return, with all my heart and with all my strength; and that, comprehending the heinous conduct of the Jews, I may experience a horror of envy, hatred, and all the evil passions which animated them, and which alas! still live in me.

I accept, in union with thee, O my Jesus! all the humiliations and all the contempt to which I may be subjected: happy if, imitating thee in thy humility and

thy resignation, I may at the moment of death, escape being dragged by devils to the foot of thy tribunal. Grant, I beseech thee by all thou hast suffered, that in that hour I may be conducted to thee by my holy angel guardian, who will ask and obtain for me a merciful sentence.

Résumé, page 392.

This night of sorrow and humiliation is succeeded by the day of the Savior's greatest torments and his death.

1. In the morning the chief priests assemble.

2. Through hatred for Jesus, they decide on sending him to Pilate to be condemned.

3. And Jesus is resigned to this new indignity: he is the victim of both Gentiles and Jews.

4. He leaves the house of Caiphas.

5. He again traverses the streets of Jerusalem.

—Let us contemplate him ignominiously bound, followed by an insolent rabble, outraged and insulted.

1. Let us compassionate his sufferings.

2. Let us make honorable amends for them.

3. Let us adore the judgments of God which the Jews execute themselves by sending the Word, their only hope, to the Gentiles.

4. Let us, like Jesus, observe modesty of the eyes in the streets.

5. Let us humbly accept contempt and insult.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION

DESPAIR OF JUDAS

I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.—Matt. xxvii. 4.

CONSIDERATION

It would seem from the Gospel that Judas had not calculated all the consequences of his crime. Perhaps he imagined that Jesus would defend himself before his judges, or that, by some special exercise of power, he would escape from the hands of his enemies and regain his liberty, whilst he himself should have none the less the price of his treason. But the traitor cannot remain under that delusion, now that he sees him condemned by the council of the nation and brought before Pilate's tribunal.

O what torments he endures! They are, for him, the beginning of hell. The gloom of sadness darkens his brow, his look is restless and wandering, his step hurried. A prey to remorse, he acts as if he bore a consuming fire within him; he wanders hither and thither without finding rest.

A new Cain, he, too, hears the terrible words: "What hast thou done with thy brother? Judas, what hast thou done with Jesus? The blood of the new Abel ascends to heaven, and cries to me for vengeance." More and more agitated, the wretch replies as Cain had done before: "My iniquity is greater than that I may

deserve pardon.”¹ I have betrayed innocent blood, all is lost;”—and he thinks he hears distinctly the sentence pronounced against the first fratricide, “Cursed shalt thou be.”² Then his agitation is redoubled; it seems to him that he is branded on the forehead with the mark of Cain; he suffers unspeakable tortures.

O sad example of the deceptions experienced by the wicked! Judas had doubtless promised himself great advantages as the result of his treason; he hoped that with the thirty pieces for which he delivered up Jesus, he would procure some enjoyment. Alas! scarcely does he acquire them when he feels pain upon pain, and they appear to him to be crushing him with their weight, and to burn like coals of fire.

Let us behold him rising in haste, taking the treasure that he had so coveted, and carrying it to the temple. There he offers it to the chief priests and tells them: “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,—take back the price of my treason.” Vain step; those wretches, more audacious than he, spurn him with contempt: “What is that to us? look thou to it,”³ they reply; then they turn away and refuse even to listen to him. At these words, Judas feels the torments of his soul increase; he sees more clearly all the malice of his crime. The disdain with which he is treated by his accomplices, also makes him understand that he has become forever odious to the whole world. He knows that God has cursed him; he reads in every eye contempt and horror; it seems to him that the disciples and all his acquaintances reproach him with his infamous deed, that men and angels flee from

¹Gen. iv. 13.

²*Ibid.* iv. 11.

³Matt. xxvii. 4.

his presence, giving him the name of traitor. "It is all over," he says to himself, casting down on the flags of the temple the thirty pieces he had received; "I shall find rest no more; lost to honor, I shall meet no one who has any esteem or even pity for me."

Thou art mistaken, O Judas! there is One whose goodness is greater than thy malice; there is one Heart that still pities thee, one Heart that loves thee. Come then, and prostrate thyself before thy divine Master; weep for thy crime and solicit pardon, and thou shalt see Jesus open his merciful arms, press thee to his bosom, and calling thee his son, give thee the kiss of peace, which alone can cure thee of the ills which thou has incurred by thy perfidious kiss. If thou dost not dare approach him, address thyself to his blessed Mother; she will obtain mercy for thee.

But no! Judas is going neither to Jesus nor to Mary; he gives way to despair; his mind is darkened, his imagination presents only dismal images, his heart is a prey to rage; and, becoming as cruel to himself as he had been to his divine Master, he seals his reprobation by putting himself to death. From his loathsome body his bowels burst forth, whilst his impure soul is carried to "his place" by devils! O sad end of Judas! O deplorable issue of crime! If it were fully realized, would any one dare to commit sin?

APPLICATION

Let us, who shudder at the thought of the misfortune of Judas, fear and adore the judgments of God; and let us comprehend to what excesses we may be led by unbri-

dled passion. Let us not count on our own strength, nor even on the means of sanctification at our disposal. Adam sinned in the terrestrial Paradise; Judas became a devil even in the company of our Lord. Let us not forget that the wretch did not fall all at once: he began by faults less, perhaps, than those which we allow ourselves; and yet he was led to sacrilege, deicide, and despair! Who can assure us that our shortcomings will not help to bring about our ruin?

Let us be faithful, then, in the smallest things; let us remain united to our Lord by prayer and charity. Let us not withdraw from our brethren; let us shun the world, and all those who would lead us to become lax. It is on these conditions that we shall remain disciples of Jesus and avoid the misfortune of Judas. We shall then not compel our God to say of us: "His bishopric let another take."¹

Let us cherish the most entire confidence in the goodness of God; let us remember that the greatest outrage that we can inflict on the heart of Jesus, is to doubt his mercy. Whatever may be our sins, let us reflect that he wishes to forgive them, provided we truly repent of them.

Let us draw a useful lesson from the answer of the chief priests to Judas. The world and the devil, whom these perfidious men represent, solicit us to evil by the hope of the happiness to be derived therefrom; and when, after having sinned, we are convinced by sad experience that their promises were deceitful, they despise us and aggravate our ills. How many an unhappy youth led astray by perfidious counsels, is told, when his

¹Ps. cviii. 8.

illusions are destroyed; "What is that to us? look thou to it!"¹

Let a religious allow himself to be seduced by the allurements and vanities of the world, and afterwards from his abyss of woe, complain of having been deceived, he will be told: "What is that to us? Look thou to it;" why didst thou look upon what thou oughtest not to have seen? Why didst thou give ear to discourses which thou shouldst not have heard? Why didst thou detach thy heart from God to adhere to creatures? The miserable state to which thou art reduced is thy own work. What are the torments of thy soul to us? 'Look thou to it!'" Such shall be the language of the devil to each of his dupes for all eternity: "Look thou to it." Why didst thou listen to me? why didst thou follow my inspirations? Wast thou not told that I am the spirit of falsehood?

Oh! let us, then, never hearken to the suggestions of the devil, the world or the flesh. The example of Judas clearly proves that such conduct, instead of procuring happiness, only brings in its train a frightful legion of woes and pains, and is the cause of an unrepentant death.

PRAYER

I tremble, O my God, at the thought that of myself I can work only my ruin. Oh! abandon me not, for then, like thy faithless disciple, I should say to the world and the devil: "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" Alas! what could they give me?

¹Matt. xxvii. 4.

They have at their disposal only numberless evils and the torments of hell—all which would be the price of my treason.

O my Jesus, preserve me from the misfortune of offending thee. If, in the past, I have been of the number of those who betray thee, grant that I may be henceforth and forever of the number of those who love thee sincerely, and who consecrate themselves without reserve to thy service. This is the grace that I ask of thee through the intercession of thy divine Mother, the assured refuge of repentant sinners.

Résumé, page 392.

Judas, blinded by avarice, had not foreseen all the consequences of his treason.

1. But now he beholds the atrocity of his crime:

2. He brings back to the Jews the money which he had received from them.

3. "I have sinned," said he, "in betraying innocent blood."

4. But they said: "What is that to us? Look thou to it."

5. Then he falls into despair and hangs himself.

—O terrible example! What a motive for us,

1. To fear and adore the judgments of God!

2. To distrust ourselves!

3. To renew our fidelity in little things!

4. To maintain in our hearts great confidence in God!

5. To be thoroughly convinced that although the devil and the world deceive us, yet there comes a moment when they say to their dupes, as the Jews said to Judas: Your damnation is your own work; but what is that to us?

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION

CAUSES OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAS

Satan entered into him.—John xiii. 27.

CONSIDERATION

Judas was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus ; he lived in the companionship of all that was holiest on earth ; he had received from his divine Master the most signal favors, even the gift of miracles. Destined to evangelize the nations of the earth he had received the power of him who sent him, and, at his voice, sinners had returned to good, devils had fled, and the possessed had recovered peace. To him and to the other apostles, it had been said : I will establish you as angel of my people ; one day, “you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”¹

And yet Judas has fallen ; and his sad story is that of a man for ever dishonored, accursed of heaven and earth. How has this star been dimmed ? how has its light been quenched ? How has this pillar in the temple of the New Law been overthrown ? O my God ! I dare not lift the veil that covers this mystery of iniquity.

Nevertheless, all that is written in the Holy Books is for our instruction. That the misfortune of Judas, recorded in the Gospels, may be to us, then, a salutary lesson, let us seek its causes in order to avoid them, and

Matt. xix. 28.

so escape the abyss into which that wretched apostle was cast. The way to evil is easy to traverse. The descent to iniquity is, indeed, quickly made, as experience but too well proves. Nevertheless, it is not usually accomplished at once. In general, it is only by degrees that men quit the way of virtue, become addicted to vice, and arrive, like Judas, at the fatal state of hardness of heart.

Perhaps, if we were to retrace his course, we should find that his first step towards evil was a slight infidelity, one of those faults which we often commit without scruple, and by which we are predisposed to commit others more considerable, till even the greatest crimes no longer frighten us. Besides, the Gospel points out divers steps in the fall of Judas:—

1. A want of charity towards his neighbor:—"He said this, not because he cared for the poor."¹ Now, he that loves not the poor who are his brethren, abides in death; and, in that state, what could Judas produce but the fruits of death?

2. A spirit of criticism:—"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence?"²

3. Avarice and theft:—"He was a thief, and having the purse,"³ he stole part of the money intended to supply the wants of all the apostles.

4. Dissimulation and hypocrisy:—He veiled his passion under the appearance of charity: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?"⁴

5. Audacity and contempt of the warnings of Jesus:

¹John xii. 6.

²*Ibid.* xii. 5.

³*Ibid.* xii. 6.

⁴John xii. 5.

—"Is it I," that shall betray thee? he asked; and the wretch had already sold him to the Jews.

Such are the principal steps in the fall of Judas, a fall so great that the very thought of it makes one shudder! Beginning with small thefts, continuing with hypocrisy and falsehood, he soon attained such a degree of wickedness as to conclude an infamous bargain with the Jews to deliver up his divine Master to them. What a subject to inspire terror in all men! What a proof that one sinks rapidly to the lowest depths of evil!

Yes, the bargain was made several days before, and the traitor is seeking an opportunity to deliver Jesus to his enemies; yet he still delays the accomplishment of his project. It is because he has not yet reached the height of iniquity. What then? Is there any thing worse than the betrayal of Jesus to the Jews? Yes! the giving up of himself to Satan by sacrilege!

The last supper is celebrated; our adorable Savior with his own hands gives himself to his disciples; and Judas receives and eats that celestial Bread, and thus to his own body and soul, which are the abode of devils, unites the body and soul of Jesus Christ. The sacrilege is consummated! Woe to him who has made himself guilty thereof! Judas is now only a slave of the devil. He rises to go and accomplish his design; he withdraws forever from the society of the disciples. When one is so far advanced in the way of evil as he then was, who can prevent him from committing every crime, from rushing without a moment's hesitation to a desperate death, and thereby casting himself into the eternal abyss? Is he not exposed to forget that there is a remedy

for even so great an evil—regret for the sin committed and confidence in God's mercy?

APPLICATION

Alas! who would not tremble while considering the conduct of Judas? Called to follow Jesus Christ, loaded with graces and favors, witnessing the sublime lessons and the example of his divine Master, he is, nevertheless, lost for all eternity; and that, because he was unfaithful in small things, and because, little by little, he yielded to faults which appeared light, but which, nevertheless, disposed him to commit the greatest crimes! Let us then search our own hearts at this very moment, and in the presence of Jesus Christ, study the sentiments that reign within us, lest we too, like Judas, become the slaves of some unruly passion.

Have we no affection for earthly goods? Are our hands perfectly clean in God's sight? Are we entirely free from all desire for ownership? Does our conscience reproach us with nothing—absolutely nothing—in the administration confided to us? O let us never allow ourselves to dispose of any money otherwise than as ordered or permitted by our superiors! This point is of primary importance. Negligence in the observance of religious poverty always entails the most fatal consequences and leads directly to the way followed by Judas; while the practice of this virtue checks a multitude of faults in their very beginning, and maintains us in the right way.

Let us shun all dissimulation; let us be frank and open with our superiors. Hypocrisy, whatever its

motive, is always odious; God, who is truth itself, detests deceit, and abandons him who is guilty of it. Let us listen with docility to the admonitions of our superiors. Let us hearken to the cry of our conscience: without this precaution, we shall quickly fall into tepidity, and ultimately into hardness of heart.

As it was sacrilege that sealed the obduracy of Judas, let us not finish this meditation without examining whether our communions are made with the requisite dispositions. Thank God, we, doubtless have purity of conscience; but have we the fervor that should animate us? Do we never approach that divine Sacrament with tepidity, a state which if not combatted may lead insensibly to unworthy communions?

Let us every day ask of God the grace of perseverance. Let us beseech him with all the fervor of our souls never to suffer us to become his enemies, but on the contrary, to give us the grace to serve him with ever increasing fidelity till the hour when he will call us to himself to receive our everlasting reward.

PRAYER

O my God, how slippery is my path and how quickly I might cross the interval that separates me from the eternal abyss, didst thou not hold out thy hand to sustain me, and send thine angel to guide my steps. When I think, O Jesus, that man is capable of every crime, that I may even become a Judas and one day betray thee, I tremble and shudder with horror. Oh! behold what my soul suffers, and reassure me. Grant thy poor servant the grace of perseverance and of fidelity to thee

even unto death. I ask it of thee through the intercession of thy most holy Mother, whom I invoke from the bottom of my heart, saying, Help of Christians, pray for me.

Résumé, page 393.

It is not all at once that Judas falls to the lowest depths of evil: there are steps in his fall.

1. He is first unfaithful in little things.

2. Then he is wanting in charity, and cherishes a spirit of criticism.

3. Then come avarice and theft.

4. Then hypocrisy, contempt of the warnings of Jesus, the project of betraying his divine Master, the sacrilege, the consummation of his treason.

5. Finally despair, and death in sin.

What crimes! To what misfortunes they lead!

—Let us, then, be convinced:

1. That one fault always disposes to a more grievous one.

2. That sin produces only sorrow and death.

3. That attachment to creatures is a chain by which the devil leads us whither he will.

4. That the virtue of poverty is our safeguard.

5. That we ought to pray earnestly every day for the grace of perseverance.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

[They] shall deliver him to the Gentiles.—Matt. xx. 19.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider how Jesus, after having suffered all sorts of insult and ill treatment in the streets leading from the palace of Caiphas to that of Pilate, arrives at length before this, the third tribunal, to be delivered to the Gentiles. By this solemn act the people of God, represented by the grand Council, renounce the Messiah promised to their Fathers, and declare that they do not belong to him who has been made Priest and King by his heavenly Father.

O unhappy Jews, what are you doing? to what extremity are you going? What! like Judas who delivered up the Savior to you, will you deliver him to the Gentiles to be condemned to an infamous death? You understand not what you lose; you see not the abyss to which envy and hatred are dragging you, when you deliver unto death him who came to deliver you from bondage, and to make you happy for ever!

And would it were only a misguided populace who demand the Savior's death!—but no: it is the chief priests, it is the heads of the nation, who are most inveterate in their hatred of him, who direct the conspiracy, who excite the multitude, who deliver up the

Messiah to the infidels. They give over Jesus in chains to the governor's soldiers; but they enter not into the pretorium, that they may be able to eat the pasch. Hypocrites, who fear to defile themselves by the touch of an unbeliever, and who scruple not to compass the death of an innocent man,—of him whom they have not been able to convict of any, the least, fault, and who, by word and deed, has given proof that he is holiness itself! They fear to contract any legal impurity, and yet they do not fear to defile their souls with the greatest of crimes!

Meanwhile, the governor condescends to come forth from his palace, and advances towards them; he consents to give an audience on the steps of the pretorium to receive Jesus there, and to hear the charges that may be brought against him.

Blinded by their hatred of the divine Savior, the unhappy chiefs of the Jewish nation had imagined that Pilate would condemn him without examination, simply at their request. "They would fain," says St. Leo, "make the governor not the judge of the case, but the blind executor of their sentence." But their calculation miscarried. Pilate does not comply all at once with their wishes; he sees in the Jews only a crowd of accusers whose assertions he has the right to examine; hence it is that he says to them, "Of what do you accuse this man?" Surprised at such a question, and scarcely knowing what charges to bring forward, they content themselves with answering vaguely, that if he were not a criminal, notoriously recognized as such, they would not have delivered him up.

O calumny! O blasphemy! He who has done only

good to all, even to those who desire his death, is called a malefactor! What! amongst the crowd that hears this accusation, is there not one to come forward, proclaim the works of his infinite charity, and say to all: "I was sick and he cured me," "I was blind and he opened my eyes;" or "I was possessed of a devil and he gave me rest and peace." . . . But no: passion or criminal tepidity makes those whom he has loaded with benefits ungrateful, and no one takes up his defence.

Pilate sees in the reply of the Jews only unwillingness or inability to arrange clearly the heads of their accusation. Wherefore he says to them: Since you know him to be a malefactor, and you will not tell me the crimes whereof you accuse him, "take him you, and judge him according to your law." "But," answered the Jews, "it is not lawful for us to put any one to death."

Then and there they acknowledged that they no longer have supreme authority, since the sceptre has passed from the house of Judah. It is, therefore, true, that, according to the prophecy of Jacob, Christ has come among men; but it was also written that he was to be disowned by the children of Israel.

Let us note, also, that the Jews substitute other charges for those which they had already preferred: there is no longer question of religion, of the destruction of the temple, or of blasphemy; the mode of procedure is changed, and iniquity belies itself.

"Of what crime do you accuse him?" again asks the governor. The chief priests seeing that Pilate was not satisfied with vague accusations, and moreover, that he did not recognize as a grave misdemeanor the pretended

violations of their law which they had first alleged, began to think that an accusation concerning public order and the interests of Cæsar, would make more impression on him. They therefore reply: "We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the king."¹

O what a perfidious choice of lying accusations! How well calculated they are to bring the governor to pronounce the wished-for condemnation! But what odious calumnies! Jesus, the prince of peace, is accused of exciting the people to revolt! He who said to the Pharisees themselves, "Render . . . to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,"² is accused by those hypocrites of forbidding tribute to be paid to Cæsar! He who fled to the mountain when the people would make him king, is accused in the people's name of pretending to royalty! Such is the perfidy of his enemies. O how grievously it afflicts his divine heart!

APPLICATION

Let us deplore, in the malice of the enemies of Jesus, a triumph of the devil himself. To what depths of wickedness does not man descend under the influence of that spirit of darkness! Alas! Satan would likewise degrade us to the same level, if we followed his suggestions.

Pilate refused to yield to the demand of the chief priests when once he saw that they were animated by envy. Like him, let us regard with suspicion all that is

¹Luke xxiii. 2.

²Mark xii. 17.

demanding by passion of any kind. When we are urged on by pride, envy, or any other inordinate feeling, let us refrain from acting; let us wait till we have restored calm to our hearts, and let us then weigh the matter carefully before God. Let us distrust grumblers and all those who speak against authority. Since it is passion that inspires them, their fault-finding ought to be an object of suspicion to us.

Let us not imitate the Jews who scruple to contract a legal impurity, while they dare to commit the greatest of crimes. Let us beware of forming to ourselves a false conscience, which always seeks to justify what is pleasing and conformable to nature.

Let us adore Jesus despised and calumniated; let us compassionate what he suffers from the blasphemies uttered against him; and let us try, by our praises, to offer him such reparation as may console his divine heart.

Let us study how he acts towards those who are destroying his reputation, and for whom, nevertheless, he entertains the most ardent charity! What a lesson for us who cannot even bear to be reproved for our faults! When shall we by our patience in suffering everything from our neighbor, testify that we are really disciples of Jesus?

PRAYER

Thou, O Jesus, the holy one of God, art accused, and thou bearest it without complaining! What an example of patience for me! Alas! how far I still am from being thy disciple! The slightest offence annoys

me; I can bear nothing. O grant that I may change my conduct, and that, animated by the desire of being like unto thee, I may resolutely embrace the practice of humility, and accept with resignation and joy all that it may please thee to have me suffer in my reputation!

I beseech thee also, O Eternal Wisdom, to defend me from my passions. I know that they bind my reason and induce me to take evil for good. Wherefore I beg thee, through the intercession of Mary, to give me the grace never to fall under their control, but ever to be master of myself, acting calmly under thy inspiration.

Résumé, page 393.

The Jews deliver Jesus to the governor.

1. In their blindness they refuse to acknowledge the Messiah.

2. In their infidelity they break the covenant which the Lord had made with them.

3. In their hypocrisy they dare not enter into the pretorium for fear of contracting legal impurity, and yet they dare procure the death of an innocent person.

4. In their blasphemy they denounce the Man-God as a wicked man.

5. In their perfidy, they have recourse to calumny, and represent as seditious and hostile to Cæsar, him who is the Prince of peace, the perfect model of obedience.

—What a mystery of iniquity! In meditating on it,

1. Let us deplore the malice of the enemies of Jesus.

2. Let us distrust our passions, for they mislead us.

3. Let us guard against forming an erroneous conscience.

4. Let us adore Jesus disowned and calumniated.

5. After his example, let us bear detraction patiently.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION

JESUS INTERROGATED AS TO HIS ROYALTY

My kingdom is not of this world.—John xviii. 36.

CONSIDERATION

The Jews wishing to ruin the Savior more effectually in Pilate's mind, persist in representing him as a seditious character who is disturbing their nation, preventing the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and setting himself up as king. The governor at once suspects the falsity of these allegations, for, had they been true, he would certainly have heard of them from those persons who had care of the public safety. He perceives that the Jews wish to circumvent him, and to extort from him an iniquitous sentence. Therefore, he takes Jesus aside to question him on the charges brought against him by the Jews. Let us contemplate our divine Savior resigning himself to this new humiliation; let us behold him standing as a criminal before Pilate. What degradation for him who has been established by his Father Judge of all creatures, for him who shall one day pronounce final sentence on the living and the dead!

Meanwhile Pilate, who does not wish to share in the injustice of the Jews, speaks with a certain degree of kindness to Jesus, and, passing over the first heads of the accusation as evidently false or unimportant,

questions him on the third: "Art thou the king of the Jews?"¹

This question could have been suggested to the governor neither by the antecedents of Jesus nor the situation in which he saw him. Hence our adorable Master replies: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me?"²

Pilate is astonished at a question that calls upon him to reveal the motives of his action, and he answers with impatience: Am I a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests have delivered thee up to me; but as I have reason to think that they conceal what really actuates them in a measure of such grave importance, I wish to learn it from thyself. What is the issue between them and thee? "What hast thou done,"³ to give rise to their accusations?

O Pilate, thou askest him what he has done, and on what account he has been summoned before thy tribunal! Dost thou not know, then, what works he has accomplished? Interrogate the sick whom he has cured, the possessed whom he has delivered, the dead whom he has raised to life, and they will tell thee what use he has made of his divine power. Interrogate those who have heard him with an upright heart, and they will tell thee what influence his words had on souls, adding that "never did man speak like this man."⁴ Interrogate his very enemies: they will testify that they could never find aught to censure in his doctrine or his conduct.

Jesus now declares his royalty, but first he makes

¹John xviii. 33.

²*Ibid.* 34.

³*Ibid.* 35.

⁴John vii. 46.

answer to Pilate, telling him: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence." Let us reflect a moment on this suggestive answer, and let us bless our divine Master for deigning, for our instruction, thus to transform into schools of wisdom the very places where he appeared most humbled.

At this moment he reveals to the world the mystery of his royalty, and declares that it is very different from that of an earthly prince, that, unlike the latter, it does not require territory, armies, external pomp, and splendor; that consequently, it is nowise incompatible with the state of ignominy to which he is reduced, and that even death cannot strip him of it.

O admirable words! O truly celestial doctrine! Jesus is, therefore, king, and truly king; but his reign is different from that of earthly sovereigns, his empire is specially over minds and hearts; it is not limited to any one land: it extends over all countries and all nations. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: hence the Jews have formed a false idea of the royalty of the Messiah; they have failed to interpret aright the prophecies relating thereto.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: hence we have reason to believe that his kingdom is spiritual and divine, that it is established in hearts by the power of grace, that it is extended by the arms of patience, and that it prospers by contempt of earthly goods.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: our

King does not, therefore, promise us temporal advantages: his rewards, like his kingdom, are of a very different nature from those of earthly kings.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: there is, therefore, another world where he rules as sovereign who, at this moment, is a victim of the most odious injustice.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world: nor do those who are really subjects of Jesus Christ, belong to this world, for they have rejected its spirit; they have renounced the pomps and the ways of the world as not conformable to the laws of the Gospel. The world, in turn, is opposed to the followers of Christ; it persecutes them and despises them, as Jesus foretold to his apostles.¹

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world; hence the Jews have no right to deliver their divine King to Pilate. Of what concern to the Roman governor is a royalty so totally different from that of Cæsar? Nevertheless, Pilate interrogates Jesus anew: "Art thou a king then?" "Thou sayest that I am a king," replies our divine Master. . . . "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth: every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."²

From these words, the governor understood that the question between Jesus and the Jews was one of doctrine, and, therefore, did not concern the Roman laws. Hence he said, with a sort of disdain: "What is truth?" And without waiting for the answer, "he went forth again to the Jews."³

¹John xvi. 33.

²John xviii. 37.

³*Ibid.* 38.

APPLICATION

Let us beware of imitating the criminal indifference of this magistrate. Let us hear our adorable Master; he will tell us that he is "the way, the truth, and the life;"¹ the way by which we must walk to arrive at his heavenly kingdom, the truth which we must believe, the true light which enlightens every man that comes into this world, the life which our souls are to enjoy. Let us be convinced that, without him, we are in a state of death, of death begun in this world by the privation of sanctifying grace, and consummated in the other by the privation of eternal glory.

Let us acknowledge him as the King of kings. Let us, with the liveliest affection, pay him the homage of our dependence. Let us devote ourselves to his glory. Let us establish his reign in our hearts: let us beg him to dwell there as on his throne, and to keep all our sentiments in perfect conformity with his holy law. Let us accomplish all that he asks of us and makes known to us through our superiors. It is thus that we shall attain to the possession of that everlasting kingdom whither he calls us to reign with him.

PRAYER

O Jesus, my divine King, I contemplate thee, in thy state of humiliation standing before idolatrous magistrates, who are seated to interrogate and judge thee; but I know that thy royalty is not like that of earthly sovereigns, that it is nowise lessened by these outward

¹*Ibid.* xiv. 6.

appearances which are so degrading to the eyes of nature. Yes! under the form of a slave, I recognize thee as my Savior and my God, and I humbly adore thee as such.

Thou callest me to follow thee, thou willest me to be one of thy subjects. Accept my thanks for that election which is so glorious for me; but grant me grace to be worthy of it by truly Christian courage and by a constant fidelity, so that when I appear before thee on the day when thou alone shalt remain king, thou mayst acknowledge me as one of thy faithful subjects, and call me to reign with thee.

Résumé, page 394.

The Jews had accused Jesus of calling himself king: it is on this head that Pilate interrogates him:

1. "Art thou," he asks, "the king of the Jews?"
2. "What hast thou done?"
3. Jesus affirms his loyalty.
4. But he says that his kingdom is not of this world.
5. He adds, that he came into the world to bear testimony to truth.

—Let us meditate on each of the words of our divine Master, and,

1. Adore him as truth itself.
2. Acknowledge him as our sovereign King.
3. Make him reign in our hearts.
4. Withdraw more and more from the world in order to merit a share in his kingdom.
5. Accomplish all that he demands of us.

Thus shall we render ourselves worthy of reigning with him in glory.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION

SILENCE OF JESUS BEFORE PILATE

And he answered him not to any word; so that the governor wondered exceedingly.—Matt. xxvii. 14.

CONSIDERATION

Pilate having heard our divine Savior reply that his kingdom was not of this world, goes out of the pretorium to the Jews, and tells them: "I find no cause in him,"¹ whereon to condemn him. Then the chief priests and the ancients of the people, still eager to attain their end, begin to utter a host of accusations to which Jesus makes no reply. Meanwhile Pilate, as though disconcerted by this fury on the part of the Jews, again interrogates the Savior, who had been brought before him: "Dost not thou hear how great testimonies they allege against thee?" But Jesus remained silent.²

Undoubtedly our divine Master could have nullified the new charges brought against him; he could, with one word, have confounded the malice of his enemies. Nevertheless, "he answered never a word;" there, as at the tribunal of Caiphas, he keeps silence.

"What dignity, what grandeur in that silence!" exclaims St. Ambrose. What a spectacle for admiration! Behold the Son of God in the presence of men

¹John xix. 6.

²Matt. xxvii. 13, 14.

who are sold to iniquity. He is exposed to the contradiction of sinners, to all the shafts of calumny; he can with one word destroy every one of these charges trumped up by insolent malice: and yet he hears them all in silence, without bitterness, without impatience, without emotion. Could he more eloquently proclaim his innocence and his dignity?

Pilate himself is surprised and amazed at a silence so mysterious, so wholly unprecedented in such grave circumstances. He sees Jesus accused of a grievous crime, for which he is about to meet a cruel and ignominious death; he knows that he is innocent; he has heard much of his wisdom and his eloquence: and yet he sees him standing perfectly tranquil, not uttering a single word in his own justification.

He admires him, and again resolves to save him; but he is weak, and consequently culpable, since he is vested with authority to act; nevertheless he dares not openly oppose the Jews and treat them as calumniators. He would wish Jesus himself to persuade them of his innocence: wherefore he says to him in their presence: "Answerest thou nothing? Behold how great testimonies they allege against thee." But Jesus still remains silent, and the governor is more and more astonished. Let us reflect on the conduct of our divine Master under these circumstances, and let us try to understand what he teaches us thereby.

"Jesus keeps silence," says St. Jerome, "because he wills that our redemption be no longer delayed. He answers all that it is important for him to answer. He declares his divinity before Caiphas and the Sanhedrim,

and his royalty before Pilate. Nothing more remains but to die for the world's salvation."

Jesus keeps silence, because his word has no effect on hardened hearts that sin with full knowledge. Besides, why should he speak, when even his judge declares him innocent, and the new accusations against him are no better founded than the others? Moreover, the clamors and vociferations of the Jews are the effect of violent passion, and hence reveal clearly enough the injustice of those who utter them. The more immoderate, the more tumultuous their cries, the more useless does justification become.

Jesus also keeps silence in order to expiate our faults of speech, especially those which we have committed in trying to excuse our sins. Our first parents excused themselves, and thereby committed a new fault; we, their descendants, imitate them, and, like them, we become more guilty. Now Jesus in his passion makes atonement for us: it is necessary, therefore, that he should expiate those sins of excuse in a special manner, and this he does by his silence at the moment when his enemies unjustly accuse him. He thinks not of himself, the Innocent One, but of guilty us whom he represents; he is silent, because our sins are without excuse before God; he refrains from speaking before human justice, because we have nothing to reply before the justice of God.

Jesus keeps silence, to exercise the most terrible of punishments on his enemies. Behold the last act of my vengeance, says God to Jerusalem, in the book of Ezechiel: "My indignation shall rest in thee; and my jealousy shall depart from thee; and I will cease and

be angry no more.”¹ Now is this vengeance wreaked upon the Jews.

When Jesus rebuked them for their wickedness, when he reproached them with their hypocrisy and with their profanation of the temple, he was merciful to them; the greater his indignation against them, the greater also his goodness of heart. But now that he is silent, he accomplishes a terrible act of his justice in their regard; he declares them unworthy of hearing his holy word, and condemns them to remain in their blindness.

Finally, Jesus keeps silence before his enemies to give us all a great example of patience and discretion in the time of adversity: in making no reply to the calumny of which he is the object, he teaches us to suffer patiently and to forgive all the injury done to our reputation.

APPLICATION

Let us faithfully observe the rule of silence. We are religious, called by a special vocation to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Our Master kept silence almost all his life, even when his reputation and his life were at stake. Can we, then, do less than keep silence in the circumstances prescribed by the Rule? Let us often remember that where there is much talk, there is also much sin.

What a lesson for us is this silence of Jesus when defamed by the calumnies of his enemies? Do we imitate his conduct when the malice of men attacks our honor and says every thing false of us? But not

¹Ezech. xvi. 42.

to speak of such hard trials, are we not vexed and troubled by a mere reprimand, by the slightest reproach? Alas! we are indeed unworthy disciples of Jesus Christ!

Let us judge ourselves severely, and beware of trying to excuse our faults. Let us remember that Jesus condemned himself to silence to expiate those sins of excuse, which are, as it were, the crowning piece of the structure reared by our crimes. When we have erred, let us confess it sincerely, and then remain silent and confused before the Lord.

Let us hear our divine Master when he speaks, and let us put his word in practice, fearing lest he should punish us with that dreadful silence which leaves man in blindness and hardness of heart.

Let us embrace these various practices with a view to honor the silence of Jesus during his passion.

PRAYER

They accuse thee, O Jesus, and thou sayest nothing to justify thyself, although thou couldst easily have done so, and everything appeared to impose it upon thee as an obligation. Thou wouldst thus teach us that silence is often the principal obligation of a Christian, because by it he atones for his sins of speech, and especially for his sins of excuse; he maintains his soul in peace during times of trial, he edifies his neighbor, he imitates and obeys thee.

Oh! teach me to keep due silence in my holy state, to bear without murmur or complaint the contempt of men and the malicious constructions which they may

put upon my actions. This grace I ask of thee through the intercession of Mary, thy most pure Mother; for during her whole life she faithfully practised those virtues which I have just been contemplating in thee, and which I desire to possess in order to please thee.

Résumé, page 394.

The enemies of Jesus continue to accuse him; the governor again interrogates him, but he makes no answer.

Why does Jesus keep silence? It is because:

1. His words are not necessary since his innocence is evident.

2. He is expiating at this moment our sins of speech.

3. He is expiating in particular our sins of excuse.

4. He is exercising rigorous justice on his enemies in leaving them in their blindness.

5. He is giving us a sublime example of patience.

—Let us, then, as religious, give proof that we take him for our model:

1. Let us observe the silence prescribed by our Rules.

2. Let us answer detraction with naught but patience and charity.

3. Let us never excuse ourselves unless ordered to do so.

4. Let us heed the word of Christ, fearing lest he may cease to speak to us.

5. Let us embrace these different practices with a view to honor his silence during his passion.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION

JESUS SENT TO HEROD

He sent him away to Herod, who himself was also at Jerusalem in those days.—Luke xxiii. 7.

CONSIDERATION

The Jews, determined to have Jesus condemned at any cost, press the governor with increasing fury: "He stirreth up the people," they say, "teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, to this place."¹ Pilate knows well the falsity of this new charge; but he avails himself of it as a means to rid himself of an affair that begins to be troublesome. Having heard the Jews utter the word Galilee, he asks if Jesus is a Galilean. On learning that he is under the jurisdiction of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, who was at that time visiting Jerusalem, he sends him to that prince, taking complacency, as it were, in the thought that he will thus be better able to pronounce sentence with due knowledge of the case.

The Jews, profiting by every incident to humble Jesus, and still hoping to obtain his condemnation, hurry him off to Herod, consoling themselves with the thought that the murderer of the Precursor will not spare the Master himself; that he who had given the head of the holiest of the children of men to pay for

¹Luke xxiii. 5.

a dance, will not refuse to condemn Jesus, whose death is demanded by the great council of the nation. Moreover, say they, Herod is still more interested than Pilate in punishing him who styled himself the Christ the king. The motives that had prompted the father to order the massacre of the children of Bethlehem, ought likewise to move the son to get rid of a man who is calumniously represented as dangerous to his power. With such thoughts they approach the palace, which has been transformed into a court of justice.

Let us here remark with astonishment, before how many tribunals Jesus Christ, who is innocence itself, allows himself to be dragged during his passion. He first appeared before that of the two sacrilegious, cruel and envious high-priests; then before that of an idolatrous magistrate; and now he is brought before the murderer of St. John the Baptist. What humiliation!

At last he reaches this new theatre of suffering. Herod had felt a sensible pleasure on learning of his approach; not, indeed, that he desired to profit by his salutary teachings, but that he hoped to see him work some miracle.

The chiefs of the synagogue now renew the accusations which they had brought against Jesus in the court of Pilate; and here, as in the pretorium, the adorable Victim gives calumny full scope, and remains silent. Herod asks some questions; but our divine Savior makes no answer.

Let us consider why Jesus still refuses to break his silence. It is because here also he expiates our sins of speech; he teaches us patience, and he visits the Jews with the most fearful of punishments in refusing to

speaking to them. Besides, he is silent to show that slaves of an impure passion, such as Herod, cannot understand, much less relish, the word of God. Our meek Savior, who fulfills, and even anticipates the wishes of the humble, not only works no miracle in the presence of Herod, but even refuses to utter a single word, thus testifying how much he condemns his excesses and his pride.

Herod does not understand the silence of Jesus, and taking offense thereat, treats him with contempt, as if he were a fool and a blockhead. He has him clothed in a white robe, and he presents him, in this state, as a laughing stock to the soldiers of his guard and to all the people. Jesus is now exposed to most cruel mockery and the most humiliating remarks. Every one looks upon him as a fool, and, following the example of Herod, takes pleasure in insulting him.

Pushed hither and thither, dragged from side to side, taunted and derided, the Savior of the world is, at this moment, inundated, as it were, with a deluge of ignominy and opprobrium. All that the fury of the devils could invent is made use of to ridicule and degrade him. Add to this, that the Jews, who are his fellow-citizens, and the Galileans, among whom he was brought up, unite in offering these shameful insults.

And yet he neither utters a complaint nor feels irritation; his face betrays no resentment, no passion, no desire of revenge. He does not raise his voice to demand justice; he manifests only the most heroic charity for men and resignation to the will of his Father. He prays for those even who insult him, and invokes on them all the graces and blessings of heaven,

which are still more numerous than the outrages where-with they afflict him.

O divine Word, O eternal Wisdom of the Father, who dost manifest so much patience in suffering all these humiliations for our sakes, how thou dost confound our pride, our sensitiveness, and our self love! Teach us to know the value of humiliations borne after thine example, and grant us the courage to accept with perfect resignation all those which Providence permits to befall us!

APPLICATION

While we contemplate Jesus outraged, scoffed, dressed as a fool, let us compassionate his sufferings, and bless him for enduring so much contumely through love for us.

Let us deplore the blindness of Herod and the Jews, and that in general of all men who are ruled by their passions. To what crimes do not these disorderly feelings give rise! Let us judge by the conduct of the enemies of Jesus: they called light darkness; they made the Word of God an object of derision; they treated as a fool him who is wisdom itself.

Let us, who acknowledge Jesus Christ to be our Lord and our God, try by our faith and piety to make amends for the sacrilegious contempt to which he was subjected during his passion. Let us adore him as the eternal Truth that gives light to the understanding.

Let us dread above all other punishments, that of the silence of Jesus; let us fear lest he who is truth itself, refuse to speak to our hearts. Let us remember

that he is silent in the tumult of passion, and that his silence is the most terrible punishment that can be inflicted on a soul on this earth.

Let us carefully preserve the white robe of our innocence, for by it our souls become like unto Jesus Christ. It was to inspire us with a love of innocence and purity that he permitted himself to be clad in white in Herod's palace.

Let us meet raillery with courage; let us not be surprised if we are ridiculed for our manner of life, and for practising the virtues of our state. Why is it strange that we be treated as fools, when Jesus himself was so treated in circumstances infinitely more painful than any in which we can ever be placed?

PRAYER

We behold thee, O Jesus, in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, standing for the fourth time like a criminal before his judge. Thou refusest submission to no tribunal, because, considering thyself as charged with every sin, thou willest to be brought before every tribunal. What outrages thou dost suffer! Thou art insulted, mocked, and treated as a fool; and yet thou art the eternal Wisdom, the source of all knowledge, the light of all minds. What odious injustice! what sacrilege! what blasphemy!

My God, behold us prostrate at thy feet, to adore thee, and to atone for the contempt which thou didst endure. Grant that we may always profess the greatest and most profound respect for thee and thy holy religion; that we may bear patiently in union with thee

the humiliations, the contempt, and the insults of men : that we may look upon the white robe wherewith thou wast clad in derision, as a symbol both of thy innocence and of what thou didst endure to destroy our pride and save our souls.

Résumé, page 395.

Pilate, neither wishing to condemn Jesus, whom he knows is innocent, nor daring, through fear of the Jews, to acquit him, sends him to Herod, king of Galilee.

Let us contemplate our divine Savior,

1. Led from the pretorium to Herod's palace.
2. Appearing before the murderer of Saint John the Baptist.

3. Keeping the most profound silence.

4. Made the object of most humiliating mockery.

5. Clothed with a white robe and treated as a fool.

Jesus, eternal Wisdom, endures all these outrages!

—And he endures them,

1. Without complaining.

2. Without losing his peace of soul.

3. Without feeling resentment.

4. Without any abatement of his charity, even for his enemies.

5. Without ceasing to take pity on their souls and to pray for them.

What a lesson for us who are so given to impatience!

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

JESUS SENT BACK BY HEROD TO PILATE

Herod, with his soldiers, despised him, and mocked him, putting on him a white garment; and sent him back to Pilate.—
Luke xxiii. 11.

CONSIDERATION

Notwithstanding his annoyance at the silence of Jesus and at his refusal to work miracles to gratify idle curiosity, and notwithstanding the calumnious accusations of the Jews, Herod does not judge the Accused deserving of death, but decides to send him back to Pilate. The chief priests are not at all pleased with this decision. Nevertheless, they conceal their vexation; they order their satellites to lead Jesus back to the pretorium, while several of them hurry forward to prejudice the governor against Jesus, and extort from him the sentence of death which he had refused to pronounce before.

Clad in white, Jesus is again given over to the mercy of the cruel men who seek his death, and who mock his pains and sorrows. He goes forth from Herod's palace where he has been treated with the vilest contempt. For the fifth time since his arrest, he traverses the streets of Jerusalem, and allows himself to be led to the pretorium there to experience still greater sufferings.

Look upon him bound as a criminal, clad as a fool, abandoned to the mercy of shameless and pitiless soldiers, surrounded by cruel enemies thirsting for his blood, accompanied by a vile rabble who continually load him with insult and abuse.

Listen to the frantic cries which the wretched inhabitants of that ungrateful city raise against him who had wrought so many wonders before their eyes, and who had astonished them by his wisdom. Who can picture his sufferings during this painful journey! What insults and blasphemies assail his ears! To what indignities is he not subjected! The crowd press around him, eager to insult him; they fill the streets and even cover the roofs of the houses whence he may be seen as he passes by. Many of the chief priests go about, seeking to stir up the hatred which hell has already kindled in every heart. The people of Jerusalem seem to have but one desire, the downfall and the death of Jesus Christ.

"O my people," might he have said with the prophet, "what have I done to thee?"¹ What could I have done for thy happiness that I have not done? Is this, then, what I ought to expect from thee? "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!"² . . . And now these very children surround me like young vultures falling on the prey which their mother, the synagogue, has delivered to them!

These are the sentiments of the heart of Jesus, when he, the Light of the world, is rejected by his people, disowned by those to whom he was sent, when the Word

¹Micheas vi. 3.

²Matt. xxiii. 37.

of God is disgraced, buffeted, derided, treated as a criminal and a fool in the very city of Jerusalem, where he had appeared full of peace and truth, manifesting infinite knowledge and infinite wisdom.

Supreme Greatness, which, as Thomas à Kempis says, is concealed for our sakes, is exposed to the insults of an insolent mob. Sublime Nobility is publicly mocked by the lowest of the people. Sovereign Beauty, compared with which there is no beauty, is disfigured by degraded men. Divine Wisdom is treated with contempt by fools. The Source of graces and blessings is loaded with curses by the impious. Innocence itself is cruelly outraged by criminals. What a sorrowful, what an incomprehensible sight! Is this, then, what was to be expected from the triumphal entry of our Savior into Jerusalem, five days before? He was then hailed as a prophet, as an ambassador of the Most High; now he is pitilessly insulted. Then his path was strewn with palms; now he is covered with mud.

Listen to those prolonged shouts of laughter that echo around our adorable Master, that hooting that indicates the lowest degree of contempt, those confused cries amid which insulting epithets, sharp and cruel mockery may be distinguished. Do you now comprehend how much he suffers?

Contemplate his deplorable state; see his weakness in his tottering steps, his sorrow in his dying eyes; enter into his heart, and ask if there be affliction like unto his! But examine, also, if ever there was goodness equal to his: for he does not curse his enemies, he does not repay outrage with outrage. On the contrary, he prays for his executioners and offers up for

their salvation the very pains which they make him suffer.

APPLICATION

O faithful souls! who feel so keenly the insults heaped upon your divine Master, turn your eyes a moment from the scoffing, jeering crowd, and fix them on the persons who have remained faithful to him. Think of the anguish of his blessed Mother, of the grief of the disciples, of the desolation of the holy women who on the way to Calvary will soon publicly testify their loyalty to him.

Doubtless, many of those who had believed in his divinity, still respect and venerate him, weep over the outrages which he endures, adore him in their hearts, and try the more to glorify him the more they see him humbled and loaded with ignominy. How sweet it is to a soul that loves Jesus to recall their dispositions, to think of the comfort which they gave him by their compassion and their homage!

Let us weep over the conduct of the enemies of Jesus, and, by sincere adoration, make amends for all the outrages which he has received from men, but especially for those which he has received from us. Let us bewail our sins by which we condemn his laws and even his adorable person; for in sinning we imitate the Jews who insulted him whom the angels serve and adore.

But we have yet other lessons to learn from this ignominious journey of Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem. How forcibly it teaches us patience and

humility! A prey to all contempt, he suffers without complaint; he even prays for his enemies. He thinks of his Church; he thinks of us for whom he merits the grace to follow him in the way of humiliation.

How loudly, also, do the outrages offered to our divine Master proclaim the vanity of the praises and plaudits of men! Five days ago he was acclaimed the Savior of the people by those who now treat him with the greatest contempt. Is there, then, anything more fleeting than the glory that comes from this world?

PRAYER

O Jesus, who dost deserve the respect and the adoration of angels and men, accept my homage in reparation for the insults heaped upon thee in Jerusalem. I unite my adoration with that of thy holy Mother, and with that of all those who, remaining faithful to thee, deplore the crime and the misfortune of the Jews.

O Jesus, by that white garment, then the mark of contempt, but since the emblem of innocence, grant that I may preserve my soul in the state of holy purity which thou demandest of me.

I have contemplated thee, outraged, despised, cruelly mocked, and I have seen thee nevertheless remaining silent and praying for those who outrage thee. Oh! grant that I may be thy worthy disciple; that, like thee, O my divine Master, I may oppose only humility and patience to the contempt, the abuse and the mockery whereof I may be the object. This grace I ask of thee through the intercession of Mary, thy blessed

Mother, whose most holy heart felt, through compassion, the counterpart of all thy sufferings.

Résumé, page 395.

Jesus is sent back to Pilate by Herod.

Let us contemplate our adorable Master :

1. Clothed in a robe of ignominy.
2. Brutally dragged out of the palace.
3. Traversing for the fifth time the streets of Jerusalem, and in a most pitiable state.
4. Cruelly jeered by the chiefs of the nation.
5. Insulted, treated as a fool by all the people.

—Let us think,

1. Of the sorrow of the most Blessed Virgin, who doubtless was not ignorant of these events.

2. Of the sorrow of the disciples who still remained faithful.

3. Of the grief of the holy women.

4. Of the sentiments of the Heart of Jesus.

5. Of our duties towards our divine Master, imitating his patience and humility, and repairing the outrages offered to him.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION

JESUS PLACED ON A PAR WITH BARABBAS

Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?—Matt. xxvii. 17.

CONSIDERATION

Pilate was greatly displeased when he saw Jesus returning from Herod's palace; he knew the innocence of the Accused; but he knew also that, animated by a jealous hatred, the Jews would not relinquish their purpose of having him condemned to the death of the cross. Nevertheless, he did not yet despair of saving him. With that intent, he again declared him innocent, and reminded the people that in doing so he gave the same judgment as Herod, who had not treated him as one deserving of death. But the Jews persisted in their iniquitous demand.

Then a new expedient occurred to him: he remembered that every year, on the paschal festival, the Jews asked and obtained the deliverance of a prisoner. With a view to induce them to ask for the release of Jesus, he placed him on a par with a man named Barabbas, who, being guilty of murder and all sorts of crime, must naturally have been an object of horror to the whole nation. Pilate, therefore, presented Jesus and

Barabbas to the Jews and asked them: "Which will you have of the two to be released unto you?"¹

What a question on the part of a judge, a governor, a Roman prætor! It is as though he said to them: Jesus, as I have judicially declared, is innocent; on the other hand, you know the crimes of Barabbas; you know he is a villain, a murderer, a disturber of the public peace, a man dangerous to you and to the whole nation. I leave it with you to decide which of the two I shall liberate.

The people, who expected no such proposal, would doubtless have hesitated in their choice; but the chief priests and the ancients going about among them, excited them to ask for the deliverance of Barabbas and the condemnation of Jesus; and, to secure the popular vote, they cried out first, "Give us Barabbas: condemn Jesus." And the whole multitude repeated those horrible words: "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas!"²

Let us assist in spirit at this shameful spectacle. Let us behold Jesus reduced to the level of Barabbas, the descendant of David compared with a vile wretch, the Just by excellence ranked with a villain, the only Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, the Splendor of his glory, treated as no more than a robber, an assassin, a seditious man, who, before being condemned, was already dead to civil society by the notoriety and infamy of his crimes! What injustice, what humiliation for our divine Savior!

Let us hear what he had said by the prophet Isaiah: "To whom have you likened me, and made me equal,

¹Matt. xxvii. 21.

²Luke xxiii. 18.

and compared me, and made me like?"¹ "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised me."² They had to choose between life and death, and they have preferred death.

O matchless iniquity! a son of Belial is preferred to the Son of God, a murderer to him who immolates himself to give us life! Unhappy Jews, your request shall be granted! The conquering Lamb shall not reign over you, for his yoke is too sweet and his burden too light! Your brow, branded with deicide, shall bear the mark of him whose children you declare yourselves to be; you shall have for chief him whom Barabbas represents, and who "was a murderer from the beginning."³ Satan shall reign over you; he shall keep you in blindness till the end of ages, even as he does now when, disowning the Messiah, you prefer to him a wretch, a ruffian!

No! Christ will not rule over you, fallen priests of Aaron, sacrilegious profaners of the holy unction! You have led into darkness those whom you were commissioned to enlighten; you have ruined them and you have destroyed yourselves. Therefore your sacrifices and your worship shall cease, your temple shall be destroyed, and henceforth you shall only be ministers of error.

But let us not confine our efforts to exciting in our hearts sentiments of just indignation; let us ask ourselves why Barabbas is thus preferred to Jesus. This choice is the effect not only of the perversity of the Jews, the envy of the chief priests, and the pride of the devil; it is still more the consequence of our sins.

¹Isai. xlv. 5.

²*Ibid.* i. 2.

³John viii. 44.

Yes, those are the weights that have borne down the balance on the side of Barabbas, the most contemptible of men, rather than on that of Jesus.

But does not Barabbas, the condemned criminal who can be liberated only on condition that our divine Savior is condemned, also represent mankind, which alas! has become so criminal after the first sin, and which, once condemned to death, has no hope of safety but in Christ's immolation? On the side of Barabbas, all men are in reality arrayed, and on the other, thou alone, O Jesus! When Pilate says, "Whom shall I deliver?" thy Father addresses thee the same question; and thou, O charitable Redeemer, O saving Victim, dost answer: "Not me, but Barabbas; not me, but men! Yes, let men be delivered, and let me be crucified for their sakes!" O Lord! is it thus that a mystery of mercy is veiled under a mystery of iniquity? that what is an act of the most crying injustice on the part of thine enemies, is on thy part the work of infinite charity and unbounded generosity?

APPLICATION

What, then, should be our gratitude to our generous Redeemer, who made himself accursed for us! To deliver us from the death to which we were condemned, he gave himself up thereto: he preferred us wretched criminals to himself. O prodigy of devotion! O incomprehensible charity! In the parallel which his mercy established between himself and us, it is we who have the advantage over him!

Let us be persuaded, from the example of the Jews,

that the passions lead us into error and warp our judgment; that under their influence, we prefer evil to good, error to truth, vice to virtue, Barabbas to Jesus!

We are justly indignant at the conduct of Pilate, who dares put Jesus on a par with Barabbas; we anathematize the Jews for their unjust choice; but have we not reason to be indignant also with ourselves? How many times have we not preferred the devil to Jesus? Do we not so act whenever we commit sin? Do we not then say: "Take Jesus from before my eyes; I will not have him for king; I prefer the devil and the world?"

Pilate did not know that Jesus Christ was God; the Jewish people were deluded by the chief priests: but we Christians, we religious, have not these miserable excuses; for we know that Jesus is our God, that the world and the devil are his enemies and ours. How, then, can we sufficiently deplore our sin in preferring the latter to him, in putting in one scale of the balance our own gratification, and in the other his adorable will, and alas! in so often sacrificing the latter to the former?

PRAYER

It is to me, O Lord, that thou dost address the reproach, "To whom hast thou likened me?" Alas! I have very often instituted a parallel between thee, O my sovereign Master, and a vile creature, between thy will and my own satisfaction. A thousand times have I hesitated between the false pleasure which is found

in sin, and the true sweetness which is experienced in thy service; between the gratification of the senses, and the accomplishment of thy holy laws; between the inspiration of the world and the devil, and the dictates of my conscience. I have hesitated; and then—ah! I dare not confess it, Lord!—I have preferred my own gratification, I have preferred the world and the devil, to thee who art my God, my life, my hope, my only true happiness.

Oh! pardon, Lord, pardon, this crying injustice, which I confess and deplore. Deign, I beseech thee, to enlighten me and direct me by thy grace, so that guided always by thy spirit of wisdom, I may never hesitate between good and evil, but dispose myself constantly and courageously to accomplish thy holy will.

Résumé, page 396.

Pilate is vexed at having Jesus brought again before his tribunal. In his anxiety to acquit him he conceives a new expedient.

1. He is accustomed to release one prisoner every year at the choice of the people.

2. He proposes to them to choose between Jesus and Barabbas.

3. The people hesitate.

4. But the chief priests incite the multitude.

5. "Away with him!" they cry out, "and deliver to us Barabbas."

—O odious comparison! O iniquitous preference! O incomparable generosity of Jesus, who consents to die for us!

1. Let us adore him making himself a victim for us.

2. Let us return him thanks for his infinite goodness.

3. Let us check our passions, the source of so many errors.

4. Let us carefully avoid sin.

5. Let us consider that to sin is to prefer Barabbas to Jesus, for the sinner says: Give me honors, riches, and pleasures; but away with Jesus! Give me my satisfaction, and not that of Jesus. Let vice reign in my heart, but let Jesus stand without. What unworthy conduct!

THIRTIETH MEDITATION

THE SCOURGING

Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.—John xix. 1.

CONSIDERATION

Though Pilate saw that the Jews had preferred the deliverance of Barabbas to that of Jesus, yet he wished to dissuade them from their unjust design. Nevertheless, he dared not directly oppose them. He, therefore, devised a new expedient which appeared likely to satisfy their hatred, or at least to excite their pity: “I will chastise him, therefore, and let him go!”—that is to say, although I am compelled to acknowledge him innocent, I will, nevertheless, scourge him; then I will present him to you, covered with blood and wounds, and, doubtless, you will no longer oppose my letting him go.

O barbarous and unjust compassion! what grief and confusion thou art going to bring upon the divine Lamb whom thou pretendest to save! O guilty and shameful weakness! What! thou knowest, O Pilate, that Jesus is innocent, and thou causest him to be scourged? Is this expedient worthy of a Roman prætor, in presence of a mob who would fain wrest from thee an unjust sentence?

Meanwhile the order is given. It is to be executed

¹Luke xxiii. 22

with unheard of cruelty by Roman soldiers. A Jewish court could not have inflicted more than forty blows; but the Roman laws do not limit the number: all power is, therefore, given to the executioners. Furthermore, the motive for the scourging of Jesus tends to make them pitiless, since it is none other than to reduce him to a state capable of softening the hard hearts of his enemies!

Let us go in spirit to the court of the pretorium; let us behold our loving Savior, so fatigued as to be scarcely able to stand, yet walking between two lines of soldiers and exposed to the increasing contempt and derision of the people and the chiefs of the synagogue. He arrives at the place of torment and is stripped of his garments. He then draws near the pillar to which he is to be bound; he bows his head in shame, and allows his hands to be bound by the ignominious cords of the executioners.

Great God! what a spectacle! How oppressed is the Christian heart at the contemplation of such a picture! Jesus, the Holy of holies is thus humiliated and reduced to the condition of a miserable slave about to receive punishment! O ye heavens, how could you shed your light on such a crime! But behold! the executioners are preparing to execute the cruel sentence. Armed with flexible rods, with knotted cords, or with leathern thongs tipped with iron, they approach Jesus and begin to strike him.

O Christians, O disciples of our Divine Savior! give ear, and, amid the cries and cruel acclamations of the Jews, hear the hissing of these cruel blows. The rods and whips furrow the sacred body of their Victim,

which is soon horribly bruised and swollen. The skin is torn, the livid blood spouts from the wounds, the flesh is exposed, and from head to foot the divine body is covered with wounds.

Nevertheless, the executioners do not stop; they reopen wounds already made; they rend the sinews of their Victim, burst his veins, tear his flesh, and lay bare his bones! The blood of the adorable Victim is shed profusely; it stains the pillar, flows on the floor, and is shamefully trampled on by the executioners. O what heart would not be moved with the liveliest compassion, what eyes would not shed bitter tears, at the contemplation of such woes, of such sufferings endured by the immaculate body of our Lord! Shame and confusion overspread his face as he endures all these tortures and all kinds of sorrow!

And thus were the words of the royal prophet fulfilled: "My enemies live and are stronger than I: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. . . . Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion and shame. . . . There is no health in my flesh. . . . I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly. . . . My heart is troubled; my strength hath left me. . . . The wicked have wrought upon my back: they have lengthened their iniquity."¹

At this moment are also fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness, and we have seen him: and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him; despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, . . . we esteemed him not, . . . We have

¹Ps. xxxvii. 20; lxviii. 20; xxxvii. 4, 9, 11; cxxviii. 3.

thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, . . . and by his bruises we are healed.”¹

APPLICATION

This spectacle deeply moves you, Christian souls, and you would indeed be much to be pitied if you were insensible to it. But mere sentiment does not suffice: you must excite yourselves to the liveliest contrition for your faults.

Alas! the scourging of Jesus is less the act of Pilate who decrees it, and the soldiers who execute it, than of us, miserable sinners. This atrocious punishment is what we have deserved; it was for our iniquities that Christ was bruised.² It was to expiate our sensuality that he was virtually flayed alive. In his innocent flesh, the spotless Lamb suffered blows and bruises in order to atone for the sins of our guilty flesh, to merit for us the grace to subject it to the spirit and to chastise it by mortification, when it rebels like an unruly servant.

Let us enter into the spirit of this mystery: let us detest sin, and thus show real compassion for Jesus in his scourging. Let us be truly grateful to our divine Savior for his ineffable goodness in substituting himself in our stead to undergo the punishment that we have deserved to receive from the devils in hell. Let us be filled with a salutary hatred of our bodies. In imitation of all holy penitents, let us mortify that sinful flesh which entices us to evil, and let us subject it to the spirit.

¹Isai. liii. 2-5.

²*Ibid.*

Let us arm ourselves with patience in afflictions, trials, and sickness. What are our sorrows compared with the sorrows of our beloved Master? What! Shall we dare complain of privation, after considering him in the state in which he was shown to the people? No! that cannot be; for we religious acknowledge him as our head, and our model; and we profess to bear the marks of the mortification of which he has given us the example, and the merits of which he applies to our souls.

PRAYER

O spotless Lamb of God, O Beloved of my soul, I cannot express what I feel as I behold thy innocent flesh ruthlessly mangled, thy veins torn open, thy blood shed, thy body covered with wounds. Behold these tears of compassion which I shed for thee. But they are also tears of regret; for when I reflect that it was I who struck thee, who gave thee wound after wound, I am heartbroken, I am covered with shame.

O Jesus, by the pains of thy scourging, forgive me; purify me in the saving bath of thy blood, and grant me to be so generous in thy service as to dread no pains, no privations, no sufferings! What are they when compared to what thou hast endured for me!

And thou, O Mary, chaste mother of holy love, deliver my soul from every stain. Ask that favor of Jesus through the merits of his cruel scourging, and obtain for me the grace to be a mortified religious and a worthy imitator of thy divine Son.

Résumé, page 396.

Pilate wishing to satisfy the hatred of the Jews, ordered Jesus to be scourged.

—Let us assist in spirit at this horrible punishment:

1. Jesus is stripped and bound to a pillar.
2. The executioners approach him and surround him.
3. They strike him with rods and whips.
4. They inflict new wounds upon the first.
5. His blood streams from every pore, the ground is covered with it, the garments of the executioners are spattered with it, his body is but one wound!

—Who would not shed tears of compassion and regret at this spectacle!

1. Alas! it is we who are the executioners of Jesus.
2. He expiates, in his most pure flesh, the impurities of our criminal flesh.
3. He expiates in particular our sins of sensuality.
4. Let us weep, then, for those of which we have been guilty.
5. Let us never more commit them.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS

and stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him; and, plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.—
Matt. xxvii. 28, 29.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior exhausted by his long and cruel scourging. He is covered from head to foot with bleeding wounds and livid bruises and is so exhausted from loss of blood that he is unable to stand. The executioners, tired of striking him, at length unbind him. No longer fastened by cords to the pillar, the divine Victim falls to the ground, where, doubtless, he would have died if his divinity, coming to the aid of his humanity, had not given him new strength and allowed him to complete his career of suffering. O grievous spectacle! O incomprehensible situation! Under the blows of his own creatures the all-powerful God sinks to the ground which he has reddened with his blood, and becomes a subject of barbarous pleasure to his enemies!

At length he raises himself, though with a thousand pains. With tottering steps he goes to pick up his scattered garments and put them on. Alas! they are the only dressing that will be applied to his wounds! And now, O Pilate! thou mayest present him to the Jews. If their hatred can be satisfied with anything short of

the death of Jesus, surely it will cease now; for nothing but death can be conceived to add to such horrible torments.

Yes, human imagination could indeed go no further; but the devil is more fruitful than man in barbarous inventions. It is he who inspires the enemies of Jesus: they will, therefore, find means to increase the suffering of the adorable Victim, and to follow up the scourging by another torture no less cruel. The emissaries of the chief priests remind the people and the soldiers, that Jesus had styled himself king, and that Pilate never mentioned him without giving him the title of "King of the Jews." They propose to make game of him, by making him a mock king and ridiculing his dignity in the most outrageous manner.

The soldiers again brutally lay hold of Jesus, still "dumb as a lamb before his shearer;"¹ they seat him on the broken shaft of a pillar, they throw over his shoulders an old purple rag for a royal mantle; then they place in his right hand a reed for a sceptre, and begin to make show of paying him homage as courtiers are wont to do to their sovereign. Then, as the height of insult, and also as an aggravation of his sufferings, a soldier approaches him with a crown of thorns which he places on the Savior's head, amid shouts of laughter from all the spectators!

Then the mock salutes and the ironical acts of homage are renewed. The soldiers gather around Jesus, and, passing in succession before him, bend the knee, saying in derision, "Hail, King of the Jews!"² With one accord all treat him with such indignity as was never offered to

¹Isai. liii. 7.

²Matt. xxvii. 29.

the vilest of wretches. Some strike him violently in the face, others pluck his hair and beard; some spit upon him, others snatch the reed from him to drive the crown of thorns into his head, and thereby renew all his pains. What a spectacle to excite our pity!

It is our divine Savior whom we contemplate seated on a stone, all covered with wounds from which the blood is streaming, wearing a purple rag on his shoulders, holding an ignominious reed in his hand, wearing on his adorable head the diadem wherewith the synagogue has crowned him.¹ His brow is pierced with thorns, his face covered with filthy spittle, and with blood which, flowing from his wounds, has trickled down over his dishevelled hair, reddened his eyebrows, and mingled with the tears on his furrowed cheeks! His own Mother could scarcely recognize him!

And you, Christian souls, do you recognize him now when he is draining the last drop of that chalice of grief and contempt, which is a thousand times more bitter than the passion itself? And yet, he is truly the adorable Son of the Father, the Image of his splendor, the sole object of his eternal delight, and like him, the very God! Yes, it is Jesus, our beloved Savior, who is so treated and who suffers so much opprobrium for our sake!

Let us, then, fix our eyes on him, and understand the value he sets on us. It is for us, it is to restore to us the crown of glory which we had lost, that he deigned to wear the crown of thorns; it is to prevent Satan from ruling us with a sceptre of iron that he bore the mock sceptre of a reed. Yes! the insults heaped

¹Cant. iii. 11.

upon him, the ignominy with which he was overwhelmed, were justly due to us, because of our crimes; and if he, in his infinite charity, had not taken them upon him to endure them in our place, we should have suffered them for all eternity.

APPLICATION

What sentiments should be ours while contemplating the mystery of the crowning with thorns! How we should hate sin! With what care we should avoid it! Let us reflect that, to offend God, is to take the reed which Jesus held in his hand, and strike with it the horrible crown which our sins have already placed on his head.

Let us not merely avoid sin; let us also strive to acquire the virtues of which Jesus gives us the example. Let us imitate his patience. We have seen him endure torments the very thought of which makes us shudder. He endured them without a murmur, remaining calm and patient on the ignominious throne on which he was seated, as if he took delight in his sufferings.

Let us imitate his humility. With what ardor, with what zeal, should we not embrace the practice of this virtue! In the scourging, Jesus expiated principally our sensuality. In the crowning with thorns, he atoned for our sins of pride and ambition, our vanity, our desire to wear the crown of the esteem of men. Can we, then, ever again aspire to be honored, after having considered our Master and Model, a victim of the most shameful outrages, and the object of the greatest contempt?

Let us beware of imitating the Jews, who did not recognize their king under the insignia wherewith they had invested him. Let us, beneath that crown of thorns, beneath that bloody mantle, adore Jesus as the king of our hearts, and let us be submissive to all his commands. He had said: "My kingdom is not of this world." He now proves it by appearing the most despised of men. King of glory in eternity, it is his will to be in time only King of sorrows.

PRAYER

O thorn-crowned King of glory, I adore thee in the state of suffering and humiliation to which thou hast been reduced through love for me. I bless thee for that infinite generosity, which prompted thee to accept so much degradation in order to raise me up to thee.

Thy sufferings excite my gratitude and my love; but they also afflict my soul. When I reflect that I have crowned thee with thorns, struck thee in the face, outraged thee and mocked thy royalty,—my heart is broken with sorrow, my face is covered with shame and I can only say: "Pardon, O Jesus, pardon, I beg of thee even by the sorrows which I have caused thee, be merciful to me."

O Mary! pray for me, poor sinner, now that I ask pardon of thy Son; and obtain for me the grace to procure him as much glory as I have caused him contempt and humiliation.

Résumé, Page 397.

These cruel executioners of Jesus are not content with inflicting wounds and bruises upon him, but they cruelly mock him in his dignity of king.

1. They make him sit on a mock throne.
2. They throw a purple rag over his shoulders.
3. They place in his hand a reed for sceptre.
4. They put a crown of thorns upon his head.
5. Then they pitilessly insult him, load him with all manner of outrages, snatch the reed from his hand and strike him upon the head.

—But why does Jesus suffer so many pains and humiliations? It is,

1. To atone for our pride and sensuality.
2. To teach us humility and mortification.
3. To preserve us from being made the sport of devils in hell.
4. To lead us to patience by his example.
5. To enable us to comprehend these words, “My kingdom is not of this world;” and to teach us that, being King of glory in eternity, he appears in time only as King of sorrows.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION

JESUS IS SHOWN TO THE PEOPLE

Behold the man!—John xix. 5.

CONSIDERATION

The passion of our Lord is but an ebb and flow of suffering and humiliation, of torture and ignominy for body and soul. After the bloody scourging followed the crowning with thorns, and after the crowning, came the shameful exposure of the Victim before the eyes of an insolent and inhuman populace.

Pilate, seeing Jesus covered with blood and disfigured with wounds, thinks that he may now present him to the Jews, persuaded that, after seeing him in that state, they will pity him and ask for his release. He believes that this expedient, suggested by his weakness and his cruel compassion, cannot fail to succeed. He argues that it is to the people that he is going to present Jesus; that they should be uninfluenced by envy or hatred, and should have no sentiments but those of affection and gratitude for one who has only done them so much good; that probably they are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to manifest their feelings towards the Savior. Moreover, he remembers that a few days before when Jesus entered Jerusalem, they received him in triumph, and he hopes that, moved to compassion, they will now ask to have

him set free. Thus, counting on the pity and the gratitude of the Jews, Pilate orders the Victim of his criminal weakness and the hatred of the chief priests, to be taken to a balcony whence he may be seen by the multitude that fills the street and besieges the palace.

When Jesus arrives there, all eyes are fixed upon him. What man, indeed, could contemplate so harrowing a spectacle without shedding tears? Behold, O people, the Nazarene! He whose beauty and grace you admired, is now in the state in which the prophets saw him, without beauty or comeliness.¹ He appears as it were annihilated; his face is covered with blood, filth and spittle; his dishevelled hair hangs down upon his bruised shoulders. Shame and confusion are stamped on his brow; his features are changed; his countenance expresses only the anguish of a breaking heart; his breast is torn with large and deep wounds; his head is crowned with long sharp thorns which pierce to the bone, his whole body is like that of a leper in whom no soundness can be found.

Consider, O Israel, to what a state the new Samson has been reduced by the cruel Philistines to whom he has been delivered by the synagogue! See with what contempt he is overwhelmed. Behold that diadem, the sight of which makes us shudder, that purple rag where-with his nakedness is covered, that reed which he holds in his right hand: for these are the insignia of his royalty. Listen to the mockery to which he is subjected; mark the barbarous insults heaped upon him. Could human imagination of itself have pictured so many humiliations after so many sorrows?

¹Isai. liii. 2.

And knowest thou who he is who is placed before thine eyes? Dost thou see in him thy Friend, thy Protector, thy Father, the Messiah expected for four thousand years? The Jews do not acknowledge him to be even man! All eyes are fixed on him; but none are moist with tears of pity. With one accord the people cry: "Away with him, away with him; crucify him!"

Pilate, who sees the disposition of the Jews, cannot assent to so much barbarity; he goes forward on the balcony, and wishing to recall the crowd to sentiments of humanity, pronounces in a loud voice those words of deep import, "Behold the man!" That is to say—Behold the state of him whom you have delivered unto me! If, in styling himself King, he has excited your envy, in his present debasement he should awaken your pity. You can no longer hate him, since his sufferings and ignominy have now reached their height.

But let us turn from that unhappy people, which, influenced by the princes of the synagogue, answers again with renewed rage: "Away with him! away with him; crucify him!" Let us reflect on the meaning of those mystic words, "Behold the man!" which Pilate utters, though he fails to comprehend the sublime truths which they express.

"Behold the Man" who mysteriously represents fallen humanity. "Behold the Man" who expiates the sins of all men, the man who sacrifices himself to restore to us our former privileges. This is the state to which his love for us has reduced the Man-God. "Behold the model Man," to whom the elect must be conformable; "the new Man," with whom Christians must be clothed

and whose livery they must wear, to obtain mercy in this world and everlasting glory in the next. "Behold the Man" whom we must recognize, adore, and glorify as God.

"Behold the man," says Pilate, and for more than eighteen centuries faith replies: "Behold the God who has saved mankind." "Behold the man," say the indifferent and the impious, speaking of Jesus; and the Church replies: "Behold the Man-God who, as he himself declared to Caiphas, shall one day come in the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead, and to manifest himself to all as the only true God."

APPLICATION

And now, Christian souls, let us picture to ourselves the Father, showing us his divine Son in the state to which he has been reduced for our sakes, and saying to us:—"Behold the Man' in whom I am well pleased, and whom you must try to resemble if you would please me. 'Behold the Man' who was bruised in his infirmity because of your sins. His garments are red as the garments of him who treads the wine-press; but they are red with his own blood which he freely sheds to effect your salvation, and to atone for your ceaseless infidelity. In reality, it is your pride which has crowned him with thorns, your ambition which has placed that mock sceptre in his hand, your sensuality which has covered him with wounds, your human respect which overwhelms him with shame."

Let us, Christians and religious, hear the voice of God the Father. Let us see in Jesus our Victim and our

Model. Let us detest sin and take every means to avoid it. Let us make ourselves like unto the new Man now shown to the world.

“Behold the Man,” to whose image we are to conform. Courage, then! Let us put on his livery, revolting though it appear to nature. Let us encircle our brow with his dolorous crown, accepting contempt and rebuke with resignation. Let us throw his bloody mantle over our shoulders, generously embracing the practices of mortification proper to our state. Let us take the sceptre of reed in our hands, humbly acknowledging that, of ourselves, we are nought but weakness and inconstancy. Happy shall we be if, at the hour of death, we may thus present ourselves before that “Man” who is the Supreme Judge of all men. He will know us by his own livery, and share with us his celestial royalty.

PRAYER

Accept my homage, O Jesus, King of kings, my Lord and my God. In vain would the wicked take from thee thy glory; in vain do they present thee with only a reed for thy sceptre, and a circle of thorns for thy crown. Thou shalt remain supreme Master of heaven and earth, sovereign Ruler in time and eternity.

O my King and my Model, I beseech thee, by the pains which thou didst endure in thy passion, give me courage to become like unto thee by the practice of humility and mortification, so that, at the hour of my death, I may address with confidence to thy Father those words which we daily repeat: “I present myself then before thee, . . . wholly covered with the precious blood of Jesus,

my Savior, beseeching thee to acknowledge me as his servant," and to make me share in his glory.

Résumé, page 397.

Pilate, hoping to move the Jews to pity, shows them Jesus in the deplorable state to which he has been reduced by the executioners.

1. He has him brought out on a balcony.
2. He goes there himself.
3. He presents Jesus to the people crowned with thorns, covered with wounds, disfigured with blood; and yet the multitude manifests no pity!
4. "Behold the man!" Pilate says to them.
5. But the people answer only with the words, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

—Let us contemplate Jesus, the man of sorrows, and reflect on what he is in himself, and what he is in our regard.

1. Behold the man, the Victim of our sins.
2. Behold the man who sacrifices himself for mankind.
3. Behold the man by whom alone we can be saved.
4. Behold the man who is the model of the predestined.
5. Behold the man! Behold the Man-God!

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION

THE JEWS CONTINUE TO DEMAND THE DEATH OF JESUS

They cried out the more saying: "Let him be crucified."
Matt. xxvii. 23.

CONSIDERATION

Let us consider with horror the cruelty, blindness, and malice of the enemies of Jesus, and learn from their example how dangerous it is to yield to pride and envy. Pilate had thought that the sight of Jesus covered with wounds and bathed in blood would excite pity in every heart; but he soon realized his mistake: for, the moment he presented him to the people saying, "Behold the man," the chief men of the nation cried out: "Crucify him! crucify him!"

Thus the cruel expedient of the weak governor was of no avail, for the passions are never appeased by a first gratification. Envy makes the heart insensible to misfortune, and closes it to pity. Man once started on the road to evil, will not stop until he reaches its very end. The hatred of the Jews is not satisfied by the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the grievous insults that have been offered to our divine Savior; it clamors for his death on the cross. "Crucify him! crucify him," shouts the multitude, urged on by the chief priests.

Pilate, thwarted once more in his attempt, says testily to the Jews; "Take him you, and crucify him; for I

find no cause in him.”¹ He thus declares Jesus innocent of the crimes of which he had been accused and for which he had been delivered into his hands. But what avails that new declaration with people who seek the destruction of Jesus, and who have already extorted so much from the weakness of a judge who publicly acknowledges the innocence of the accused?

Again repeating the pretended delinquency of the Savior on the score of religion, they invoke against him the law of Moses: “We have a law,” say they to Pilate, “and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”² O hypocrites! who appear zealous for the law, whereas in violation of the law, you conspire the death of the Just One! Yes, O chief priests and ancients of the people, you have a law, but it is for you a dead letter, a sealed book: you no longer understand it. You recall it to condemn Jesus “who made himself the Son of God;” but does not the law give testimony of him? Do you not read in it that the Messiah was to come with all the marks which Jesus bears? You have a law, you say; alas! you do not appeal to it in order to submit to it. Sacrilegious profaners! you make use of it only to obtain your criminal ends.

The Jews had hoped that Pilate, who was little acquainted with their law, would yield to their testimony and condemn Jesus for announcing himself the Son of God; but that word, which, in their fury, escaped from them, well-nigh snatched from them their Victim. As soon as Pilate hears their new accusation, he becomes more fearful than before. He perceives the divin-

¹John xix. 6.

²*Ibid.* 7.

ity of the Accused, who is so different from all others, who has manifested so much wisdom in the few words that he has spoken, who has shown himself so strong under affliction, and who has been mild even to his enemies. He has him brought in again, and asks him whence he is. But as Jesus makes no answer, the governor says to him impatiently and threateningly: "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?"¹

It is thus that Pilate speaks of the power vested in him; and nevertheless, by a guilty cowardice, he dares not use it in behalf of him whom he has found and declared innocent. But Jesus, wishing to give him a new lesson, reminds him, gently yet firmly, of the origin of that power: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore, he that hath delivered me to thee hath the greater sin."²

What precious teachings are contained in this answer of our divine Master. The power of resisting him comes from above. Hence it is the most high God, who has deigned to give men power over himself. On his part, therefore, his immolation is a free act, inspired by his love for us and by his infinite generosity.

In reminding Pilate of the origin of his power, Jesus teaches that authority and power to act are given to men to use only according to justice, and never as subserving the passions. In telling the Roman governor that he is less guilty than those who delivered him up to judgment, he also lays down the grand principle, that they who are

¹John xix. 10.

²*Ibid.* 11.

more enlightened on the good to be done are the more criminal when they do evil.

Pilate understands, to a certain extent, these sublime teachings, and would fain set Jesus free; but he is far from being influenced solely by love of truth and justice. Moreover, he fears to displease men, and it is through this very fear that the Jews are about to force him into granting what they ask: "If thou release this man," say they, "thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."¹

These threats make a very deep impression on the weak governor. Yet he makes another attempt. Sitting on the seat of judgment, he presents Jesus to the people, and pronounces those mystic words, "Behold your King." But the Jews, refusing to acknowledge Jesus as their king, cry out: "Away with him, crucify him."²

Pilate again proclaims the Savior's royalty. "Shall I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Cæsar,"³ the chief priests reply. O blindness and injustice of the Jews! Not less cruel to themselves than to Jesus, they shall not have for king the Lamb of God whose authority they refuse to acknowledge; but they shall be ruled with a rod of iron, then crushed by the very power to which they declare themselves subject.

APPLICATION

What profit may we not draw from this meditation! And first, let us be persuaded that our passions can never be satisfied; that if they are not resisted, they

¹John xix. 12.

²*Ibid.* 14, 15.

³John xix. 15.

will draw us into the abyss of evil, incite us to say of Jesus, in the depths of our heart, the very words of the Jews to Pilate, "Away with him! crucify him!" They will separate us from him who alone is the Author of all good, and apart from whom we can expect only infinite misery.

Let us not imitate that cowardly governor who, yielding to human motives, dares not oppose the enemies of Jesus. Let us impose silence on our passions. This is always possible by the grace of God. We are all free, and have received from above power to choose good or evil. Let us often reflect that we should make only a right use of this power; that is to say, that we should decide only in conformity with the prescriptions of the divine law, and not according to our unruly passions. Since we are religious and have received so much light to do good, let us act only from motives of faith; let us never obey our vicious inclinations. How guilty we should be if we cherished sin in our hearts!

Let us pay homage to our divine Savior, who, to save us, gave power over himself to men. Let us love him, let us thank him for his infinite generosity, and renewing our consecration to him, give him, in return, all power over our hearts.

PRAYER

O Jesus, King of kings, accept the offering that I make to thee of my heart and all that is mine. Yes; O my beloved Master, I belong to thee, and my sole desire is to testify this to thee by courageously struggling against my passions, and by constantly obeying

thy holy law. Give me strength to carry out the resolution which I now form, of being wholly thine, and of proving to thee by all my actions, that I really acknowledge thee for my Lord, my King, and my God!

Résumé, page 398.

Let us meditate on the clamors of the Jews for the death of Jesus.

1. Pilate says to them, "Behold the man!" but they cry out, "Let him be crucified!"

2. Pilate refuses their demand.

3. They persist, renewing their accusations.

4. They threaten Pilate with the enmity of Cæsar.

5. "Shall I crucify your King?" he says to them. And they reply, "We have no king but Cæsar!"

—What instructions may we not derive from this meditation—

Let us remember that,

1. Jealousy tends to make us blind and brutal.

2. It is of his own free-will that Jesus sacrifices himself: the power of Pilate over him comes from on high, and consequently from Christ himself.

3. All authority comes from God.

4. Those who have more light to do good, are more guilty if they do evil.

5. Every thing must be sacrificed to justice and charity.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Jesus he delivered up to their will.—Luke xxiii. 25.

CONSIDERATION

Pilate, wishing to save Jesus from the cruelty of the Jews, proclaimed his innocence, caused him to be cruelly scourged, presented him in the most pitiable state to the people, and appealed to their generous feelings. But all these means, suggested as they were, by his criminal weakness, were ineffectual. The same death-cries are still heard. The seditious demand is enforced by the threat of denouncing the governor at the court of Cæsar. Pilate is overcome; he is about to yield to pressure from the chief priests and the ancients of the people. He is going to yield! And yet what motives he has for still resisting, aye, for resisting even unto death! Should he, a Roman governor, quail before sedition? Can he as judge resolve to sign an unjust warrant, to declare deserving of death him whom he has just declared innocent of all crime? Moreover, has he not received several warnings from heaven? Has not his wife told him, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man?"¹ And has he not himself perceived something of the divinity of the Accused, whose conduct is so extraordinary, so different from that of others?

¹Matt. xxvii. 19.

But these motives, all powerful as they ought to be, vanish before the fear of disgrace from Tiberius: the cowardly governor yields. Nevertheless he wishes to manifest by a ceremony in use among the Jews, that he throws upon them the responsibility of the judgment which they force from him. He causes water to be brought in a basin, and, washing his hands before the people, he says: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it."¹ The Jews, however, disregarding the warning and the declaration, cry out that they assume the whole responsibility of the condemnation which they are demanding. Let us hear them utter that imprecation which, standing alone in the annals of nations, is unequalled in the rigor of its fulfilment: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"²

Unhappy people! what words have you uttered? What! a pagan trembles when about to condemn a just man, and you, adorers of the true God, shrink not from calling down on your own heads the divine vengeance merited by that condemnation! You think not that the blood that you are about to shed is the blood of a God, and that he who will avenge it, and whose wrath you provoke, is the Master of time, who disposes of the nations of the earth at will, and who has all eternity wherein to exercise his justice!

O people, do you not fear to incur the fate of Cain, who, through envy, arose against his brother Abel, and killed him?—the fate of Cain to whom God said: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth . . . cursed shalt thou be upon the earth . . . a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou

¹Matt. xxvii. 24.

²*Ibid.* 25.

be,"¹ bearing on thy brow a sign whereby all men may know thee?

No! the Jews do not foresee the woes which they are drawing down upon themselves. They are far from realizing that the utter ruin of their country shall follow the frightful words, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"

Jesus on hearing this imprecation is overwhelmed with sorrow: he sees numberless calamities coming upon all Judea and especially on Jerusalem. He weeps anew over that ungrateful city and her children who, rejecting the salvation that he brought them, choose for their portion malediction and death.

Pilate also hears this imprecation and shudders with horror; but he takes advantage of it to excuse his weakness, and stifling the last cry of conscience, he orders the sentence which they demand, to be written out. He afterwards pronounces it; but, says St. Athanasius, he trembles while doing so, as if he himself were the accused and not the judge. "O Pilate, O prevaricating judge!" says St. Cyprian, "a time shall come when thy soul shall fall into the hands of him whom thou condemnest: he shall judge thy judgment, and punish thee for the wrong which thou hast done."

The sentence is passed on Jesus. What a spectacle, Christian souls, is now presented to our eyes! The wicked have gained their end, and have caused the Innocent One to be condemned to a most infamous death. The angels veil their faces on seeing the consummation of this greatest of all iniquities. Pious persons, who had cherished some hope that the love of justice manifested

¹Gen. iv. 10-12.

by the governor would ultimately prevail, feel sad at heart and cruelly deceived. Hell is let loose on earth; the Just by excellence, the Holy One of God is treated as a criminal; the Author of life is judged worthy of death.

Let us behold Jesus standing as a criminal, listening to the decree of death; let us behold the chief priests and the doctors of the law, exciting the people to applause that is most humiliating to our divine Savior, felicitating themselves on having gained their end, and desiring nothing but the shedding of their Victim's blood on the sorrowful tree to which he is to be fastened.

APPLICATION

While contemplating Jesus sentenced to death, let us seek the true cause of his condemnation. We shall not find it in the warrant signed by Pilate, which expresses only a glorious title, that of "King of the Jews." But if we look into our own hearts, it is there we shall find it; for, alas! it is our sins that have caused that sentence to be pronounced on our adorable Master, according to the prophecy of Isaiah: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . : for the wickedness of my people have I struck him."¹

Let us reflect that to deliver us from eternal death, Jesus willed to be condemned to the ignominious death of the cross. What then, ought to be our sentiments of gratitude towards him! From the warrant issued against us, miserable sinners, he erases our name and

¹Isai. liii. 6, 8.

inscribes his own: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!"¹

We have contemplated our divine Master, hearing with the greatest resignation the iniquitous sentence of the governor! Let us, after his example, be patient and resigned when men condemn us and blame our conduct. It is often justly that we are rebuked, for, alas! we all have our faults. On such occasions let us bless God who wills that we be admonished, and let us labor to correct ourselves. If we were unjustly reprimanded, let us unite ourselves to Jesus, the thrice holy God, condemned to a most infamous death; and, like him, let us pray for those who persecute and calumniate us.

PRAYER

O Jesus, although innocence itself and the source of all sanctity, thou art condemned to death, to the death of a malefactor! But why, O Lord, is so iniquitous a sentence passed upon thee? Whence comes it that thou art judged unworthy to live even by him who proclaimed thee innocent? It is because my sins, wherewith thou art charged, have called down on thy head the malediction which I have deserved; it is because by an excess of infinite generosity, thou hast substituted thyself for me, to suffer the penalty of my crimes. It is, therefore, really on my account that thou art condemned; and, so this sentence, which redounds to the eternal dishonor of him who pronounced it, is indeed my work. O what a subject of shame and regret for me!

Why can I not, O my Jesus, deplore with tears of

¹John xix. 19.

blood my misfortune in offending God, and in thus necessitating either my condemnation to the pains of hell, or thine to the torment of the cross? Give me, I beseech thee, with the grace of true contrition, that of the most lively gratitude to thee, so that I may unceasingly bless and thank thee for thy sacrifice which is the ground of my salvation.

Résumé, page 398.

Let us assist in spirit at the condemnation of Jesus, our adorable Victim.

1. The Jews continue to cry out: "Crucify him!"

2. Pilate yields to their barbarous demands.

3. But he loudly proclaims that he will not assume responsibility for the sentence which he is about to pronounce. Washing his hands, he says: "I am innocent of the death of this just man."

4. The Jews answer: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!"

5. Then the governor pronounces the sentence which condemns Jesus to the death of the cross.

—Let us reflect,

1. On the iniquity of the sentence.

2. On the cruelty of those who demanded it.

3. On the baseness of him who pronounced it.

4. On the terrible malediction which the Jews thus called down upon their heads.

5. But, above all, on the generosity of Jesus, who is condemned to death only because of our sins.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS LOADED WITH HIS CROSS

The government is upon his shoulder.—Isai. ix. 6.

CONSIDERATION

Scarcely is the sentence of death pronounced when the soldiers who are charged with its execution lay hands on Jesus. They take away the purple mantle of his royalty wherewith they had clothed him in derision; then they array him in his ordinary garments that he may be more easily recognized when placed between the two thieves who are also led to execution. And Jesus, still patient and silent, allows himself to be in turn stripped and clothed; he utters no complaint, notwithstanding the pain and confusion that he feels.

O Christian souls, let us consider our beloved Savior abandoned to the will of his enemies. Neither law, nor human power, any longer prescribes limits to their cruelty; there is no longer a heart to pity him; each one seems to say: "Let us treat him as an infamous man, let us hasten to banish him from the earth—let him die!"

Yes! O chiefs of the synagogue, Jesus shall die, because the present moment is yours; but cherish not the hope that his name shall be forgotten and his memory shall perish. He who told you, "This is your hour," has not given you the future; he has even declared that in

the time of his divine vengeance he shall one day be seen in the clouds of heaven clothed in the might of his power and in the majesty of God.

Meanwhile Jesus is brought out of the pretorium; he is led to the cross on which he is to be immolated, and which he is condemned to carry to the summit of Calvary. Oh! who can tell what he now suffers? Let us reflect that he has taken neither rest nor food since he left the supper-room, that he has been for long hours a prey to all the inhumanity of an infuriated populace, that he has shed a great quantity of blood in the Garden of Olives and during the scourging; that he is covered with wounds and still crowned with thorns; that, in consequence, he must be reduced to extreme weakness. He can hardly stand erect, and yet he is obliged to bear the crushing weight of his cross!

Let us contemplate him in presence of that instrument of ignominy and death, which our sins are to place on his shoulders. What repugnance! what horror it excites in his soul! Nevertheless, he approaches with resignation the cross on which he is to be immolated; he regards it calmly, and accepts it with perfect submission and even with joy, as being presented to him by his Father. He takes it in his arms, and, touching it, sanctifies it; he kisses it as the altar of the divine sacrifice which he is going to offer for us; he clasps it to his breast as though to express how much he has desired it, and how greatly he esteems it; he bends under the dolorous burden, and lays it on his bruised and mangled shoulders!

O Christian souls, let us reverently enter his sacred heart, and view the feelings that crowd upon it. On the one hand, Jesus is filled with horror and disgust at the

sight of the infamous wood whereon he is to die ; on the other hand he is filled with love and joy, and seems to say : I see thee, I touch thee, I at last possess thee, O cross which I have so much desired, and which shall be the memorial of my love for men. From thee they shall learn how much I love them, and by what pains I have merited salvation for them ! And these sentiments of love, joy, and the desire of sacrificing himself for us, prevail.

But while contemplating Jesus taking up his cross, let us reflect on what that mysterious wood is to the eyes of faith. The Cross is the standard of the Supreme Monarch, which shall be raised in the sight of all men, and around which all nations shall rally. It is the great ensign of the King of earth and heaven ; it is the sceptre by which he shall rule throughout the world, according to that saying of David, which the Church solemnly sings : “By the wood the Lord hath reigned.”¹

The Cross is the altar of the holocaust whereon the Saving Host shall be consumed ; it is the wood which the God of Abraham has laid on the shoulders of the new Isaac, as he ascends the mountain of sacrifice ; it is the precious candlestick whereon the Light of nations shall be exposed ; it is the tree that shall bear the Fruit of life and thus repair the transgression of Adam and Eve in eating the fruit of death plucked from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Cross, being the emblem of the trials and sufferings of life, encourages us to accept them with resignation and bear them with patience ; for it is by them

¹Hymn, *Vexilla regis*

principally that we make ourselves like unto the divine Crucified who is our Master and Model.

The Cross is the Christian's book, wherein are written, in most eloquent language, the love, tenderness, and infinite generosity of Jesus towards us. The Cross is a monument of the omnipotence and the divinity of Jesus Christ: from an infamous instrument, it has become the sign of glory and triumph, the reward of heroic deeds, the ornament of the diadems of kings. Could its destiny have been thus changed, had not a God touched it with his sacred hands and sealed it with his blood? Much more will he do to glorify it; for, on the last day, he will manifest it to all men, shining with the brilliancy of a star in the heavens.

APPLICATION

Let us, henceforth, pay homage to the Cross of our Savior; let us salute it with respect, let us kiss it with love and piety. Let us often read that sacred book, in order to learn how Jesus has loved us, and what our salvation has cost him. We shall thereby obtain the grace to lead a truly Christian life, and merit at the last day the happiness of contemplating that sacred wood which, on earth, has been the object of our pious homage and profound veneration.

Let us accept the sufferings and trials of life with the greatest resignation and in union with Jesus loaded with his cross. Let us heed his exhortation to imitate his patience: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Let us, in his holy presence, ask ourselves if we who make profession of imitating him have worthily answered his call.

How do we receive the Cross? Is it not with an excessive repugnance, which we fail to combat although we have supernatural motives which should induce us to accept it with patience? Do we not murmur against those from whom we receive it? Do we not cherish an inordinate desire of being delivered from it, or even of having another cross than that which we now carry? This does not become disciples of Jesus Christ. No, we must not fear to carry the cross; it opens the way to heaven; in it are salvation and life. In the Cross, says the author of the Imitation, "is protection from enemies. In the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross is strength of mind; in the Cross is joy of spirit. In the Cross is height of virtue; in the Cross is perfection of sanctity."¹

PRAYER

O Jesus, may thy Cross speak eloquently to me of thy love for me! May it persuade me to accept with patience and resignation these troubles of life which are the crosses thou wouldst have me bear! Grant, O my Savior, that, through love for thee, I may bear them courageously, and esteem myself happy in having through them some points of resemblance to thee.

O adorable cross, consecrated by the loving embrace of the only Son of God, O infinitely precious wood, O altar of his bloody sacrifice! I salute and revere thee. Thou

¹Bk. ii. ch. xii. 2.

art my refuge and my only hope. It is through thee I hope to obtain of my adorable Savior the grace to imitate him in his sufferings, so that I may be one day inseparably united with him in glory.

Résumé, page 399.

How, without being deeply moved, can we consider our divine Savior laden with his cross?

1. Jesus, crowned with thorns and covered with wounds, is conducted to the place where the cross awaits him.

2. He regards it with resignation.

3. He kisses it, for it is the altar of his sacrifice.

4. He stoops and places it upon his bleeding and mangled shoulders.

5. He offers to his Father all that he is about to suffer upon that painful and ignominious wood.

—Entering into the spirit of this mystery,

1. Let us adore Jesus laden with the instrument of his death.

2. Let us reverently study the dispositions of his Heart.

3. Let us truly venerate his cross.

4. Let us accept with resignation all that we may have to suffer in this life of probation.

5. Let us often ask of our Lord the grace to imitate him in his sufferings, that we may share in his glory.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION

JESUS CARRIES HIS CROSS

They led him out to crucify him.—Mark xv. 20.

CONSIDERATION

Who can comprehend the sufferings of Jesus bearing his cross? Let us contemplate him, Christian souls, as he sets out on that mysterious journey, which is henceforth to be called the Way of the Cross. The chiefs of the synagogue, who seek not only to put him to death, but also to ruin him in the estimation of the people, do all that their infernal jealousy dictates to increase his confusion and to expose him to the contempt of the spectators. Wherefore it is that Jesus is obliged to walk to the place of execution, in company with two criminals, in order that he may be considered a malefactor.

O what shame is felt by the Son of God, who is holiness itself, when he is presented to the eyes of all as the most guilty of men! What a triumph for the devil and the Jews, who have no other end in view but to humble and degrade him! What joy for the chiefs of the synagogue who at last succeed in averting the affection of the multitude from him, and in exposing him to odium and contempt! Their satisfaction is manifest in their countenances, and they take delight in loading our divine Savior with the most degrading and insult-

ing epithets. The people, imitating their chiefs, gather in crowds on the road to Calvary, and glory in adding to the tribute of insult and contempt paid the adorable Victim.

Meanwhile the death-train advances: the lictors go before with mournful trumpets; then come the soldiers, the priests, and the officers of the temple, and lastly the executioners. In the midst of them walks the divine Victim followed by several chiefs of the synagogue, who join the mob in uttering the most revolting blasphemy, and in loading with curses him who, having made himself accursed, is led out of Jerusalem to be immolated for the sins of all men.¹

Let us give ear to those tumultuous shouts, to those insults offered to Jesus and his doctrine. Is it possible to imagine humiliation greater than that which he experiences? Now is accomplished that prophecy of David: "For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger to my brethren. . . . The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. . . . They that sat in the gate spoke against me; and they that drank wine made me their song."²

But this is not all that he endures while journeying from the pretorium to Calvary! His strength is exhausted, his body is covered with wounds; his mangled flesh seems to fall off in shreds; the heavy cross where-with he is loaded rests on one great wound. Moreover, the crown of thorns still causes him the most excruciating torments; for at every motion he makes it catches on the cross, renews the wounds in his adorable head,

¹Heb. xiii. 12.

²Ps. lxviii. 8-13.

and sends a thrill of anguish to the very marrow of his bones! Everything in him reveals the excessive suffering that he endures: his eyes are languid, his lips livid, his features contracted, his mouth inflamed, his face bathed in sweat. He might be tracked by the divine blood that, flowing from his wounds, falls to the ground, and is trodden under foot by a cruel and sacrilegious multitude.

Who would not be penetrated with the liveliest compassion, at seeing the God of all sanctity suffer so many pains! Who would not melt into tears at the sight of the Victim of our salvation, bearing on his mangled shoulder the wood of his sacrifice! Let us remember, Christian souls, that he whom we contemplate dragged to a most infamous torture, is the divine Word, the perfect Image of the Father, the object of his eternal delight, the Messiah promised to the earth, the Redeemer of mankind, the Son of promise in whom all nations shall be blessed,¹ but whom his own nation at this moment repudiates, the Heir who, sent by the master of the vineyard to demand fruit of the husbandmen, is cast out, robbed of his inheritance,² and put to death.

In the eyes of men who judge only by the exterior, Jesus is a criminal going to the place of execution; in the eyes of the angels, he is the universal Pontiff and the Victim of salvation entering into the sanctuary, and offering up his blood to efface the sins of the world. Apparently, he is only a criminal capable of inspiring nothing but horror and disgust; in reality, he is the sovereign Master of heaven and earth, who at this very

¹Gen. xxii. 18.

²Matt. xxi. 38.

moment gives lessons of the most sublime wisdom, and calls an infinite number of disciples who, like St. Paul,¹ will glory in the humiliation of the Cross.

The Savior walks on surrounded by a multitude of fierce men, who seem to be animated by the fury of devils; but he is also accompanied by angels who form a guard of honor and endeavor to repair, by their profound adoration, the outrages inflicted on his adorable person.

APPLICATION

Let us Christians, disciples of that suffering God, not content ourselves with deploring the crime of that lawless multitude; but, in union with the angels who accompany him, let us prostrate ourselves in his presence and adore him. Let us, by our sincere homage, make him honorable amends for all that he suffered from his enemies, in his journey from the pretorium to Calvary.

Let us ask our adorable Master, why he suffers, and we shall learn from him that it is to merit for us the grace of salvation, to snatch us from the power of hell, to make us understand how great an evil sin must be, since it has caused him so many sorrows.

Let us hear him repeat: "If thou wilt come after me, take up thy cross and follow me." Let us accept that divine invitation. Let us carry our cross courageously after our Master, bearing it with faith, patience, and resignation, and thus we shall become like unto

¹Gal. vi. 14.

that New Man to whom all the elect must be conformed.¹

Let us always make the Way of the Cross with piety and attention. How touching indeed, is the practice of the faithful of all countries and of all times, following in spirit the bloody footsteps of Jesus in his sorrowful journey, stopping as often as he stopped, meditating on his sublime teachings, weeping with him over the misfortune of sinners, and exciting themselves, by the consideration of his numberless sufferings, to patience and resignation in the trials of this life!

O how dear to us should be this holy exercise! Mary, our heavenly Mother, first taught it by her example; the Church enriched it with the most precious indulgences; and, after devotion to the Holy Eucharist, none is more proper to confirm us in piety, to encourage us in good, and to strengthen us against the attacks of the devil.

PRAYER

O Jesus, divine Lamb, whom I contemplate going forth from Jerusalem, "loaded with the cross of our sins and the curses of the people," I acknowledge and adore thee as my Savior and my only hope. O holy Victim, suffer me not only to follow thee in thy painful journey from the pretorium to Calvary, and to weep for my sins which are the true cause of thy sorrows, but also to praise, exalt, and bless thee, and thus repair the insults heaped upon thee by the crowd that accompanies thee.

¹Rom. viii. 29.

Give me, O Lord, grace to enter into the spirit of the mysteries whereon I meditate when I have the happiness of making the Way of the Cross. Grant that the contemplation of what thou hast endured for me may inflame my heart with the most ardent charity, and render me patient and resigned in all the tribulations which it may please thee to send me in this life!

Résumé, page 399.

Jesus, bearing his cross, journeys to Calvary.

What humiliation, what suffering he endures!

1. He is accompanied by two thieves, and escorted by his executioners.

2. He is mocked, insulted, blasphemed.

3. His cross is heavy, overwhelming him.

4. It bears down upon his bruised and wounded shoulders.

5. Every step causes him inexpressible pain; his footprints are stained with blood.

—Behold, to what a state he whom the angels adore is reduced by our sins!

1. Let us adore him in union with these blessed spirits.

2. Let us make him reparation for all that he suffers from his enemies.

3. Let us weep for our sins, for they are the cause of his sufferings.

4. Let us love the Way of the Cross, and make it with sentiments of true piety.

5. Let us suffer with resignation the pains of this life. Let us ask that grace of Jesus carrying his cross.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION

**JESUS FALLS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF
HIS CROSS**

The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.—Isai. liii. 6.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior journeying painfully along the way to Calvary, and leaving bloody footprints after him. Let us recall to mind all that he has suffered, the cruel and odious manner in which he has been treated, how he was taken from Gethsemane to Jerusalem, then from one tribunal to another. Let us remember his agony in the Garden of Olives, his bloody sweat, his scourging, and his crowning with thorns. Let us reflect that since the previous evening, he has not had the least nourishment, and let us try to estimate the state of weakness to which he must now be reduced. His strength is exhausted; he is, as it were, dying, nay, he would, in fact, be already dead, had he not, by a miracle, retained the feeble breath of life which alone seems yet to animate him.

And yet he must climb the hill of Calvary, bearing on his shoulder the wood on which he is to be immolated. It is with this burden that his enemies have loaded him; but they now urge him on, impatient as they are to see him die. He ascends Calvary very slowly. Hence the executioners wax wroth, and, to

hasten his steps, some drag him, others push him, all torment him with brutal insolence. Alas! he cannot gratify their wishes. His progress becomes more and more painful; every step forward causes him the keenest suffering. Soon his knees bend beneath him; his strength utterly fails him, and he falls under the weight of his cross.

Let us contemplate him prone on the ground, crushed by his heavy burden, and surrounded by an inhuman crowd that gloats over his sufferings.

Who can conceive what he now suffers? His mangled body sustains, as he falls, a horrible shock which re-opens every wound. His lacerated arms and knees are again more cruelly torn owing to the violence with which he strikes the ground, against which his head is pressed by the weight of the cross, so that the thorns encircling his brow are driven farther in.

Although he lies in a dying state on the road, no one draws near to assist him. His enemies are so far from pitying him that they look upon his fall as only another occasion for renewing the insults and outrages where-with they have loaded him ever since he has fallen in their hands. They beat him cruelly and insult him vilely, compelling him to rise. O God, what a sight! Who can look upon it without shedding tears of compassion! Let us, then, shed abundant tears of pity, and thus testify the part that we take in the sufferings of our beloved Lord, who sacrifices himself for us.

Let us behold him trying to rise: he turns, and, supporting himself with his hands, rises first to his knees, and then to his feet. Bending then under his heavy burden, he journeys toward Calvary, where, alas! he

is to arrive only after several other falls, which torture him no less than that which we have been considering. But let us here make some reflections in keeping with the spirit of this mystery.

Jesus falls under the weight of his cross: what a subject of wonder! He who sustains worlds by his all-powerful will,—he whom the prophets called the “most high Lord,”¹ “Wonderful,” “God the Mighty,”² seems to be the weakest and most miserable of men! O Jesus, art thou not the true Samson? Is not thy cross, as Isaiah foretold, the sign of thy power? How, then, has it become a burden which thou art not able to bear? I hear thee answer that thou dost fall not so much under the weight of that cross of wood, as under that of the penalties of which it is the symbol, and by which, at this moment, thou art utterly overwhelmed.

Jesus sees the justice of his Father who now exercises all his severity on him; he sees the sins of all men with which he is charged; he beholds that deluge of iniquity which began with the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and which will continue to the end of ages. He reflects that although he is about to die for all men, yet a multitude of them, in their perversity, will fail to profit by his sacrifice, and will be lost for all eternity. He sees also the negligence, the indifference, and the apathy of so many souls who, although favored with most precious graces, will, nevertheless, not correspond to his designs upon them, and instead of serving him with increasing fervor, will languish in dreary tepidity. All this oppresses his soul much more heavily

¹Ps. xevi. 9.

²Isai. ix. 6.

than the instrument of his execution weighs down his body.

APPLICATION

Let us be deeply convinced that our sins have overwhelmed Jesus, and, according to the expression of the prophet, pushed him, and overturned him that he might fall.¹ Let us, then, weep over them, and with the tears of compassion which we shed for the Victim of our salvation, let us mingle tears of true repentance.

Let us never more yield to sin: to act otherwise would be to overwhelm the heart of Jesus with sorrow, to add to the weight of his cross, and to join his executioners in heaping the most cruel outrages upon his person. Let us henceforth be on our guard against those fatal falls which deliver us into the power of the devils. Should we chance to fall, let us arise immediately; Jesus has merited this grace for us, together with that of walking with courage and confidence in the way that leads to heaven.

Let us enter on this path after him, and resolve to quit it no more. Doubtless, the enemy of all good will attack us fiercely; but by the merits of the cross we shall overcome him. Should we chance to fall under his blows, let us have recourse to Jesus, and arise at once. Our divine Savior fell three times on the way to Calvary; thereby teaching us that, whatever may be the number and the grievousness of our falls, we must not be discouraged, since his mercy is boundless and the merits of his sacrifice are infinite.

Jesus, falling under the weight of his cross, also

¹Ps. cxvii. 13.

teaches us a sublime lesson of patience and resignation. For he bears without anger, even without a murmur the insolent abuse of his executioners; he loves with a divine love even those who strike the most cruel blows, and he offers his sufferings to God the Father for them as for all other men. What an example! Let us often recall it, and let the recollection of it comfort us in adversity, and strengthen us to bear all the contradictions and miseries of this life.

The cross which we have to bear is made up of our trials. Let us, then, not dread it; for there is no escape from it. Let us take it up in union with Jesus Christ, and we shall receive that strength which he has merited by his passion, both for us, and for so many martyrs and confessors of the faith, who found in sufferings and death not a subject of dread, but a source of true consolation and of ineffable joy.

PRAYER

I have contemplated thee, O Jesus, falling under the weight of thy cross, and thou hast made me understand that my sins were the cause of thy fall. Grant, I beseech thee, that I may bewail them sincerely, that I may do real penance for them, and never commit them more. I ask this of thee through the merits of thy carrying of the cross, and through the intercession of thy holy Mother, who so tenderly compassionates thy sufferings.

Résumé, page 400.

Let us contemplate Jesus following the way to Calvary:

1. He advances slowly.

2. Being exhausted, he walks with the greatest pain.

3. He soon begins to stagger.

4. Then he falls under the crushing weight of the cross.

5. Behold him rising and again burdening himself with the instrument of his torture.

—What reflections this picture should suggest to our piety!

1. The all-powerful God falls from sheer weakness.

2. He is overwhelmed by the weight of his cross.

3. But he falls rather under the weight of our sins.

. . . How heartily then, should we detest them!

4. Jesus falls, but his persecutors cease not to insult him; yet he bears with them. He pardons them and prays for them.

5. What an example! Do we imitate him?

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER

And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.—Luke ii. 35.

CONSIDERATION

When Mary is informed by the apostles of the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, she realizes that the moment has come for the fulfillment of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, and consequently, of that which the holy old man Simeon, addressed to herself: “Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.” Wishing, then, to know more particularly what was taking place, she hastens in the morning to her divine Son, to assist him as far as she can, or, at least, to console him in his sufferings. She would doubtless have gone into the palace of Caiphas, into that of Herod, even into the pretorium, had she not been prevented by the crowd. In the opinion of several Fathers, she could see Jesus when he was presented by Pilate to the Jews in his bloody insignia of mock royalty; she heard the cry of the people, “Let him die; crucify him;” and also the sentence which condemned him to the death of the cross. What trials afflict her spirit! What anguish pierces her heart! What tears gush from her eyes!

Soon Jesus goes forth from the pretorium bearing his cross, and Mary hastens to gain such a position as will enable her to see him as he passes. Meanwhile our

divine Savior advances on his sorrowful way; he is a prey to the insults and maledictions of a whole nation; his heart is utterly desolate. He looks through the crowd for even the faintest sign of pity; but, seeing only hatred and inhumanity, he says: "I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none."¹

Nay, O Lord! thou shalt not bear thy divine sorrows alone; the heart of thy most holy Mother is too closely bound up with thine not to feel every torment that is inflicted on thee. She, then, compassionates thy sufferings, and in her person, the entire Church grieves for thee.

But see! the dismal procession approaches the place where she is standing. Soon the lictors who open the march pass before her; the soldiers follow, then some of the chief priests and officers of the temple,—all blaspheming against Jesus. But she heeds them not; her tearful eyes wandering over the ascending crowd seek another object, and all at once are fixed.

O what a sorrowful spectacle for Mary! She beholds her adorable Son, his strength exhausted, his countenance disfigured with blows and bedaubed with spittle, dust and blood, his brow crowned with thorns, and his neck bound with a rope. She sees him between two ruffians, as he walks painfully along under the burden of his instrument of torture, blasphemed by the people, and ill-treated by the soldiers! Who can conceive the torments which she suffers? They are measured by her love for Jesus, and that love is unbounded.

¹Ps. lxxviii. 21.

At this moment Mary bears in her heart the cross which Jesus bears on his shoulder. She is overwhelmed with grief and anguish. The horrible sufferings of her divine Son rend her soul, and inflict on her a most cruel martyrdom, or rather all martyrdoms together. O tender Mother! how can we explain otherwise than by miracle, that thou didst not die while contemplating the terrible spectacle that meets thine eyes!

Meanwhile Jesus has reached the spot where his divine Mother awaits him. He looks upon her; what a heart-rending sight, what a subject of pain for his adorable heart! He sees his beloved Mother plunged on his account in an ocean of grief. The weight of his cross, the wounds made by the crown of thorns and those inflicted by the scourges—all these are most acute; but the sight of his sorrowing Mother is the keenest of all his sufferings.

He would like to offer her at least some words of consolation; but the brutal fury of the Jews allows him no pause. Mary on her part longs to give him some token of love, to press him to her heart, to wipe his face, to take his cross and carry it herself; but she is not suffered to go near Jesus, as he moves forward with his tearful eyes fixed on her.

Who can describe the mystery of that sorrowful meeting and of those looks of mutual compassion? Jesus suffers on seeing the desolation of Mary, and Mary, on seeing the sufferings of Jesus. And so in this mute interchange of love, the Son and the Mother experience the greatest affliction. Mary feels through compassion all the sufferings of Jesus, while the sufferings of Jesus are increased by those of Mary: there is, therefore, in

both a continual increase of sufferings, which ceases only when the divine Mother of the Savior has suffered in her soul all that she is capable of enduring.

Let us contemplate Mary following Jesus as he bears his cross up the hill of Calvary, and watering with her tears the bloody footprints which lead her to the place where he is to be immolated. O Mary, most desolate of mothers! thou art the Queen of martyrs. Greater affliction than thine we cannot conceive; for never can any other creature say with so much truth: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!"¹

APPLICATION

Let us not be content with mere compassion for Mary; let us ask ourselves why she who never sinned, had to suffer,—why Jesus did not remove from the lips of his most holy and immaculate Mother, the chalice which he himself could hardly drink.

It is because, being united most intimately with her Son, she could not but share his sufferings, and feel them as her own. It is because being more faithful to grace than any other creature, she was the first to respond to that call which Jesus made to all, to take up their cross and follow him. It is also because being co-redemptrix of men, she was to suffer for our sins with the adorable Victim who took them upon him. Moreover, "the Man of sorrows" being the model of the elect, it was fitting that she who was the most perfect copy of that model, should also be called "the Mother of sorrows." It is, also, because Mary on this

¹Lament. i. 12.

occasion represented the Church, and the Church was to be associated with Jesus in his sufferings.

Let us dwell on the thought that Mary suffered on account of our sins. Yes, it is we who, in committing them, laid sacrilegious hands on her beloved Son, disfigured him, struck him, and tormented him. It is we who placed the crown of thorns upon his head, loaded him with the infamous cross, and presented him in that dolorous state to her maternal eyes! How cruel we have been to our sweet Savior and his divine Mother! Let us then, weep over our sins, and be firmly resolved never more to commit them.

Let us do penance for all the sins of our past life, and in that view, let us follow Jesus bearing his cross, and follow him with resignation, courage, and love, notwithstanding the repugnance that we may feel. Let us often, at least in spirit, make the Way of the Cross in union with Mary traversing the road to Calvary; like her, let us with our whole heart compassionate Jesus in his sufferings.

Let us ask the assistance of Mary for poor sinners, who are also her children, and who, alas! present themselves before her burdened with the weight of their transgressions, bound by their evil habits, horribly disfigured by sin, and surrounded by devils. Let us pray her to obtain their deliverance. Let us pray to her also for ourselves, for we also are her children, and we, too, follow painfully in the footsteps of Jesus.

PRAYER

O Mary, remember that thou art our mother, and look upon thy children who follow Jesus along the way

to Calvary. Behold our weakness, our exhaustion, and our sufferings; be moved by our piteous state, O dear mother, and follow the dictates of thy compassionate heart. Come to our aid; thou canst do so, O Mary, for there is none to keep thee from holding out a helping hand to us. O obtain for us the grace to answer most faithfully the call of thy divine Son, and follow him even unto death.

Résumé, page 400.

Behold the hour in which the prophecy of Simeon is accomplished.

Mary, who doubtless had observed her divine Son in the different phases of his passion, learns that they are conducting him to Calvary.

1. She wishes to accompany him, she makes her way through the crowd.

2. The soldiers prevent her from approaching Him.

3. She places herself where she can see Jesus.

4. As she beholds him, what are the sentiments of her maternal heart?

5. What are those of the heart of Jesus?

—But why is it that Mary, the holiest of creatures, suffers, and suffers so much? It is because:

1. Being intimately united to her divine Son, she must of necessity share his sorrows.

2. She was to be the first to obey the call of Jesus for all to carry the cross after him.

3. She was to co-operate with Christ in the redemption of mankind.

4. She was to be the most perfect image of Jesus, the Man of sorrows.

5. She represented the Church; and the Church was to be associated with her divine Spouse in his sufferings.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION

SIMON OF CYRENE ASSISTS JESUS TO CARRY HIS CROSS

They found a man of Cyrene named Simon; him they forced to take up his cross.—Matt. xxvii. 32.

CONSIDERATION

The Jews, having seen Jesus fall from weakness, while ascending Mount Calvary, feared, says Denis the Carthusian, that he might die on the way, and thus deprive them of the barbarous pleasure of witnessing his death on the cross. Wherefore, not to relieve his pain, but rather to prolong it, they stopped a man of Cyrene who was passing that way on his returning from the fields and compelled him to carry the cross after the Savior. How fruitful in salutary instruction is not this circumstance, which is mentioned in the holy Gospel! While every detail here seems to be the effect of chance, yet in reality it has been preordained by divine Wisdom.

Jesus would have a stranger assist him in carrying his cross. That stranger represented the Gentiles who were to embrace the true religion. It is, therefore, all of us who, in the person of the Cyrenean, are called to take part in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, to bear the cross with him, to apply to ourselves the merits of his sacrifice by filling up in ourselves that which, according to St.

Paul, is wanting, in his passion.¹ Our redemption can not be effected without ourselves. As members of Jesus Christ, we must suffer with our Head. Let us realize this thoroughly and accept with resignation, nay even with joy, the share which he wills us to take in his passion. Our God has gone before us in the way of suffering. He has ennobled the cross by taking it in his divine hands and carrying it on his shoulder; he has thereby ennobled all the pains and afflictions of life, of which the cross is the symbol. Should not we then learn the lesson not only of bearing our trials patiently but even of glorying in suffering?

The meeting with Simon the Cyrenean took place when Jesus had traversed the greater part of the way and was already within a few paces of the summit of Calvary. This teaches us that our share in the sufferings of our Redeemer is very small in comparison with the portion which he keeps for himself. Indeed, he has reserved for himself the greatest pains, asking from us only so much as will enable us to share in the merits of his sacrifice.

Although the Jews acted freely and from a criminal motive, when they compelled the Cyrenean to help Jesus carry his cross, yet they also fulfilled the will of God, for on that occasion Simon represented all the converts to Christianity. Let us learn from this that the designs of God are always accomplished, and that, while he respects the liberty of man, he infallibly executes all the decrees of his providence.

Simon is highly honored in being allowed to touch the Savior's cross, to help him carry it, and thus to assist

¹Col. i. 24.

at the great sacrifice of the supreme Pontiff; but he does not yet understand the greatness of his privilege. He sees only the pain and humiliation attached to the service which he is commanded to do and which, if he dared, he would refuse; he obeys only because he is obliged to do so, and he doubtless rebels interiorly at the violence done him.

It is thus that we act when Jesus calls upon us to bear the cross with him. We view things from a human standpoint seeing only our natural repugnance for suffering and humiliation, and not the honor and the spiritual advantage to be gained from being humbled with Jesus and for his sake. We look only to the creature in our trials and so complain of the injustice of men when we should rather be grateful for the special protection which God has extended to us.

Although Simon refuses the cross yet he is obliged to bear it; and so it is with us. In vain do we seek to escape the tribulations of life; we are compelled to undergo them, and by our refusal only make them more painful. The cross is inevitable: "Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou wilt still find something to suffer. The cross is always ready and everywhere awaiteth thee. Turn thyself upward or turn thyself downward, turn thyself inward or turn thyself outward, everywhere thou shalt find the cross, and everywhere thou must of necessity hold fast patience. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end; namely, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end. If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burden to thee, and

loadest thyself the more, and, nevertheless, thou must bear it.”¹

Simon at first carries the cross against his will; but by degrees his mind is enlightened from above, his heart is inflamed with divine love, and he no longer feels either reluctance or fatigue. Grace triumphs over nature: he comprehends the dignity to which he is called by God; he experiences the truth that, whereas it appears hard, it is easy and even sweet to follow Jesus; and instead of complaining of the choice made of him, he blesses the Lord for it and desires to suffer more to please him.

And this is the case with all Christians when they accept the pains and humiliations of this life in a spirit of faith and in union with our Lord. “Such a one, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some relief or consolation; because he is sensible of the very great profit he reaps by bearing the cross. For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God. And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more is the spirit strengthened by interior grace.”²

Jesus gives the cross to Simon and then walks before him. This is to teach us that only that cross will avail to salvation which God wills us to bear, and not that which we choose ourselves; that it will not effect our sanctification, unless we accept in union with the sentiments that animated our Lord.

APPLICATION

Let us raise ourselves above nature, and shape our course only according to the principles of the Holy Gos-

¹Imitation, Bk. ii. ch. xii. 4, 5.

²*Ibid.*, 8.

pel and after the example of the Savior. Let us always regard with the eyes of faith the trials and humiliations of life, especially those which are incident to our state: they are the cross that Jesus presents to us, and bids us carry after him. Let us not be ashamed to accept the cross, since our God did not disdain to bear it and thereby sanctify it.

Let us not judge our cross by our natural feelings, but by the light of grace. Let us value it as the saints valued theirs, as we shall value ours at the moment of death; or rather as we shall value it when we are in heaven, where we shall clearly understand that here below God chastises those whom he loves, that he makes those whom he destines for eternal glory, pass through the crucible of tribulation.

Let us consider the trials that we receive from the hands of men as coming from God himself, and let us profit by them to become more like to Jesus Christ, and thereby increase our merit for heaven. Let us be full of courage and confidence. Our cross is very light if we compare it with that of our Savior, or even with that which we deserve to bear! Besides, our Lord goes before us, to encourage and strengthen us; let us, then, walk after him, putting in practice that exhortation which he addresses especially to us Religious: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹

PRAYER

Thou callest me, O Jesus, to bear the cross and follow thee: and therein I know thou givest me a mark of thy

¹Matt. xvi. 24.

great affection for me, a proof that thou dost destine me to share one day in thy glory. Why then am I unwilling to accept the cross? Alas! I consider only the pain and trouble of bearing it, and not the advantages which I may derive therefrom. Have pity on my blindness and my weakness; enlighten me from above, O word of God, that I may truly esteem the cross, and strengthen me to bear it in union with thee.

Résumé, page 401.

Let us contemplate Jesus carrying his cross and toiling up the mountain of Calvary:

1. His human strength is exhausted.
2. The Jews fear that he may die on the way.
3. But a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, is passing by.
4. They stop him.
5. They compel him to carry the cross of Jesus.

—O how instructive are the different circumstances of this incident!

1. In Simon the Gentile world is called to carry the same cross.
2. It is glorious to carry the cross after Jesus.
3. It is repugnant to nature, but it is pleasing to grace.
4. The cross is inevitable: why seek to shun it?
5. Let us accept with faith and love the cross that God wills us to bear; for this it is that will save us.

FORTIETH MEDITATION

A PIOUS WOMAN WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Who shall comfort thee?—Isai. li. 19.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior continuing his weary journey to Calvary; let us consider him spent with fatigue, suffering unheard-of pains, overwhelmed with grief and oppressed with anguish. O Jesus, how lamentable is thy state! Too truly, alas! is that prophecy of Isaiah now fulfilled: "We have seen him . . . a man of sorrows, . . . whereupon we esteemed him not."¹ The most beautiful of the children of men is horribly disfigured; his august face, on which the angels desired to look, and whence the saints draw their happiness, is covered with blood and spittle, with dust and sweat; that countenance which has hitherto revealed all the beauty of a divine soul and constituted the delight of the Eternal Father himself, now horrifies those who look upon it.

Is this the face that Mary and Joseph covered with kisses, that the old man Simeon rejoiced on beholding, as he exclaimed: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation . . . a light to the revelation

¹Isai. liii. 2, 3.

of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”¹ Of a truth never was man found in so pitiable a state!

And yet, with the exception of his blessed Mother and Simon the Cyrenean, not one in the immense crowd that surrounds him, comes forward to console and relieve him. Pity seems to be dried up in every heart; Jews and Romans alike are either actuated by hatred and cruelty, or remain in the most shameful indifference. Nevertheless, in that multitude there must be many who have admired the sublimity of his teachings, who have been fed with miraculous bread in the desert, or cured of their infirmities. Yet no one presents himself to defend Jesus, to protest against the injustice done him, or procure for him any relief. What cowardice! What injustice!

But a pious woman has placed herself in the way of the divine Savior; like Mary, she wishes at least by a look to manifest her compassion for him, and give some comfort to his divine heart by showing him that there are still souls who are faithful to him and burn with love for him. Scanning the dreary procession, she perceives her beloved Redeemer, but in so frightful a state, that her heart is ready to break. Her eyes fill with tears; her soul is moved with the liveliest compassion, and shares in all the sufferings of Jesus. She entertains no sentiment but that of pity, which is the more powerful because of her love of her Savior and his need of relief. Without pausing to calculate or reflect, but urged on by the charity with which she is animated, she makes her way through the astonished soldiers, to the person of Jesus, bends before him and then wipes his adorable

¹Luke ii. 29-32.

face. O how touching is this trait of genuine compassion! O how worthy of our admiration is this holy woman who is presented to us in the sixth station of the cross!

To reward her for her act of charity, Jesus Christ vouchsafed to leave the imprint of his august face on the white cloth that she had used; and thus she was the first to have an image of Jesus suffering—and an image made by himself! What a precious favor! What a treasure to her must have been that holy and true likeness! With what piety, what emotion, what love did she contemplate and venerate it! How many times must she not have kissed with the most profound respect the impression of the adorable face of Jesus immolating himself for men!

Although horribly disfigured, the face of our divine Savior is not an object of aversion to this woman. Far from turning away from it, she rather delights in contemplating it. Enlightened by faith, she discovers a ravishing beauty under that exterior which is so hideous to the eyes of nature; for she realizes that this bruised and mangled face is truly the face of the Christ-king, of him who is the Splendor of God the Father; and that the blood, the spittle, and the dust with which it is covered, are voices that speak to her eloquently of his love for men.

The prodigy, wrought in favor of this holy woman, is also a figure of the special graces and signal favors which God often grants, even in this world, to generous souls that have the courage to overcome themselves on difficult occasions. Our divine Savior shows them the features of his adorable face, which he impresses deep

in their hearts, thereby sustaining and encouraging them in the accomplishment of the duties imposed upon them by their love for him and their devotedness in his service.

APPLICATION

To us also, Christian souls, our divine Savior shows himself in such a state of suffering as to excite our compassion. For he manifests himself to us in the person of the poor, the unhappy, the sick, of those for whom we feel an aversion, perchance even disgust. Can we behold him thus with indifference? Can we refuse to render him any service in our power? We piously venerate the image of his sacred face, the crucifix, and every other object that recalls him: but do we reflect that the sick and the unhappy, whosoever they be, are living images of Jesus suffering? Let us, therefore, show respect and affection for them.

Let the courage of this holy woman, who fearlessly makes her way through the soldiers to do a service to a condemned criminal on his way to execution, teach us how efficacious is the grace of God in docile souls; how strong, generous, superior to themselves it makes them. Let us, then, have confidence in that divine assistance which is given us when needed, and which will enable us to triumph over our natural feelings and practise courageously the Christian and religious virtues befitting our state.

Let the image of Jesus suffering be the object of our worship; let us carry it about with us, and kiss it with piety, love, and gratitude. Let us bear it in our heart;

let us often picture it to our imagination; and, at the same time, let us elicit most sincere acts of thanksgiving, and of love for our generous Redeemer.

Would to God that our souls, having no affection for creatures, might be compared to the clean white cloth of the pious woman who wiped the face of Jesus! What happiness would be ours if this were so! Our souls would be conformable to him who is the model of the predestinated.¹ Jesus would recognize his image in them, and at the moment of our death he would reward us with the eternal contemplation of his beauty.

PRAYER

O Jesus, the fairest of the children of men, how pitiable is thy state as thou climbest the hill of Calvary! With what grief and compassion thou inspirest me! Why can not I, like that holy woman on whose courageous action I am meditating, wipe away the dust, the sweat, and the blood with which thy face is covered? Why can not I, like her, preserve the imprint of thy features, that I may keep my eyes ever fixed upon it, press it often to my lips, and kiss it with the greatest veneration?

But my desire is not vain. The service rendered to thee by that holy woman, I may render to thee, O my Savior, by exercising charity towards my Brothers and my pupils, especially towards those for whom I feel any natural dislike; and thy holy image I have not only in the crucifix, but also in my suffering brethren. Let it be also in my heart, where I beseech thee to impress thy divine features so deeply that at my death thy Father,

¹Rom. viii. 29.

recognizing my likeness to thee, may admit me to contemplate with the elect thy glorified countenance, which constitutes the felicity of the angels and saints in heaven.

Résumé, page 401.

A pious woman compassionates the sorrows of Jesus.

1. She contemplates his face hidden, as it were, under a veil of dust, sweat, and blood.

2. She makes her way through the soldiers.

3. She approaches him.

4. She wipes his adorable face with a cloth.

5. And Jesus leaves on the cloth the impression of his face. What a precious relic!

—Let us, while meditating on this subject, admire,

1. The faith of this holy woman, who in Jesus thus disfigured recognizes her God.

2. Her courage, which nothing can restrain.

3. Her charity and her compassion.

4. The graces which Jesus bestowed upon her.

5. And, in particular, the signal favor by which he rewards what she has done.

Let us ask Jesus to imprint his features on our souls.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION

JESUS CONSOLES THE HOLY WOMEN

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children.—Luke xxiii. 28.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior ascending Calvary and drawing near the place of his sacrifice. His executioners have relieved him of his cross; but as it was not so much the wood that crushed him as the weight of our sins, he is still weak and languishing, and walks with the greatest pain. He is surrounded by an immense crowd, who continue to insult him and blaspheme his holy name. The Jews, in particular, manifest their eagerness to see him fastened to the cross and elevated in the sight of all.

Nevertheless, some holy women are touched with compassion, and follow him weeping and lamenting. They thus manifest their love for our Savior, and their horror of the deicide which the Jews are committing. Without doubt, Jesus is consoled by this proof of affection and accepts the tribute of their tears: yet he seems to be indifferent to them. Even as he appeared insensible to his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, so now he appears oblivious of the part which these pious women take in his pains and humiliations. His sufferings are excessive, and his degradation extreme; but he heeds it not: he

forgets himself to think only of the salvation of men.

Turning towards the holy women, he looks on them kindly and thereby gives them both consolation and an abundance of grace. Then for their instruction and for ours as well, he tells them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"¹ How worthy these words are of our most serious meditation!

"Weep not over me."—But, Lord, art thou not in a most pitiable state? How can we contemplate thee, the Beloved of our hearts, covered with wounds, overwhelmed with opprobrium, condemned to be crucified, and not feel the liveliest compassion? How can we see thee shedding thy blood, and not mingle our tears with it as it flows?

Yet thou sayest to us: "Weep not over me." Yes we understand. It is not to forbid our tears, but rather to manifest the generosity of thy heart. It is as if thou didst say: "This is the day that I have so ardently desired, the day of the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and for which I have sighed for thirty-three years. My love will not be satisfied until I have given my life for the salvation of the world. Behold, now the moment has come. Do not by your tears lessen the joy of my heart."

"Weep not over me; but," adds our divine Master, "weep for yourselves and for your children." Weep over your sins and those of your people; weep not over the woes which they have brought on you and on them. Thus he teaches us that if it be reasonable to deplore an

¹Luke xxiii. 28, 31.

evil, it is much more so to deplore its cause. Hence his torments and his ignominy, excessive though they be, ought to call forth less tears than the sins which were their cause.

It is our sins that delivered him to his enemies, that mangled his body under the blows of rods and whips, and drained his veins of their blood. It is our sins also that plaited the crown of thorns, and placed it on his brow, thereby disfiguring his august countenance. It is our sins that after having laid the cross on his bruised shoulder, pierced his hands and his feet and took away his life. Our sins, therefore, should be the first subject of our tears.

“Weep for yourselves and for your children.”—Our divine Savior, whose heart is an abyss of kindness and tenderness, thinks less of his sufferings than of the misfortunes of the people to whom he was sent and whom but for their perverse will he would have saved from everlasting death. He repeats his predictions concerning the ungrateful inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem: “The time shall come when they will begin to say to the mountains: ‘Fall upon us;’ and to the hills; ‘Cover us.’”¹

O loving heart of Jesus, thou forgettest thy own sorrows in thy concern for the misery that is to come upon thy people, and in the longing to avert the bitterness of their suffering! Deal as mercifully with us. Teach us what misfortunes threaten us, and, by thy grace, enable us to avoid them.

Our divine Master concludes his warning with these terrifying words: “If in the green wood they do these

¹Luke xxiii. 30.

things, what shall be done in the dry?"¹ If the fire of divine justice is so active on me, a green tree, laden with flowers and fruits, what will it do to the sinner who is but dry wood, barren and useless? . . . If such evils overwhelm me, who have merely taken the appearance of sin, what must not those expect who are really stained with its guilt? O sublime lesson that Jesus gives us in these few words! Why have we not learned it better? why do we not make it the rule of our conduct forevermore?

APPLICATION

In union with the holy women of Jerusalem, let us compassionate the sorrows of Jesus; let us share his sufferings, remembering that he suffers because of our sins and for our sake. Let us weep over him; but as he exhorts us, let us weep rather for ourselves. Let us bewail the spiritual miseries that have afflicted mankind ever since the day of the first sin. O how great reason have we not to shed tears of compassion for ourselves!

Let us weep for our sins, for they have overwhelmed the divine Victim of our redemption with sorrow and ignominy; but let us bewail them sincerely. Let us this very hour begin a truly penitential life, and so procure for the heart of Jesus that consolation which he most demands of us, and which will merit for us a share in the fruits of his sacrifice.

Woe to us, if we neglect to weep for our sins, and to do sincere penance for them! Woe to us if, during our life, we are but dry wood, dead branches cut off from

¹Luke xxiii. 31.

Jesus, the true vine to which we must be united, if we are to bear salutary fruit and find favor before God!

Let us atone for others and particularly for our relatives; for by their sins, they also offer insult to God, do injury to themselves, and draw down calamities upon the earth.

Let us be more and more penetrated with fear of God's justice; let us strive to mitigate its rigor, to avert which, alas! we may as yet have done nothing. Let us examine in the presence of our divine Savior, whether we are the dry wood to which he alludes in the words on which we have been meditating. Do we possess the spirit of faith and charity which, like a vivifying sap, produces fruits of sanctification and salvation? or are we so withered up by pride, vanity, envy, sensuality, indifference to the things of God, and barrenness of good works, as to call down the divine vengeance on ourselves?

PRAYER

O Jesus, thou dost bid us weep not over thee, but over ourselves. Inspire us, then, with the sentiments of compassion which thy state should excite. Let us weep over thee; let us weep over thy sorrows which are greater than all other sorrows. But let us also weep over ourselves, because we have had the misfortune of offending thee by our sins, and of causing thy sufferings. Grant, I beseech thee, that weeping over thee and over ourselves we may participate in the merits of thy holy passion; and persevering in the accomplishment of our duties, we may be in thy sight not the dry wood which thou didst curse, but the green wood to which thou comparest thyself;

for it is only the green wood that will be transplanted to the gardens of the heavenly Sion.

O holy daughters of Jerusalem! who did not fear openly to manifest your compassion for your divine Redeemer, obtain for us strength always generously to confess him, and to walk courageously after him on the way of Calvary, the only way that leads to heaven.

Résumé, page 402.

Jesus ascends Mount Calvary, accompanied or followed by an immense multitude that continue to outrage him.

1. Yet there are some holy women who compassionate his sorrows.

2. How consoling to him is this mark of piety and affection!

3. He looks upon them kindly.

4. He consoles them, and enriches them with his graces.

5. He instructs them, and in their person all men, saying: "Weep not over me, but over yourselves."

—Let us regulate our conduct by these words:

1. Let us compassionate the sorrows of Jesus, let us weep over him.

2. But let us weep still more over ourselves, miserable sinners.

3. Let us weep over our sins and those of our relatives.

4. Let us fear divine justice.

5. Let us fulfil all our duties as religious and as teachers, that we may be the green wood to which Jesus compares himself, and not the dry wood, which he will cast into the fire.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION

JESUS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

They stripped him of his outside coat.—Gen. xxxvii. 23.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our divine Savior on the summit of Calvary. This is the end of the dolorous way that he had to traverse. Would that it were also the end of his sufferings! But it would seem that all that he had previously undergone—the agony, the bloody sweat, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of the cross,—are but the prelude to what he is yet to endure. All these sufferings did but mitigate the intensity of divine wrath, which is yet to be fully vented on the Victim of our sins; for it is on Calvary that divine justice is waiting to strike.

Jesus has reached the summit of the rock where he is to be lifted up on the cross; he is surrounded by a crowd eager to satisfy its morbid curiosity. Jesus looks before him and around him. What a horrible picture meets his eye! Here the cross, the nails, the executioners: there, the Pharisees mocking him sacrilegiously; farther on, the crowd loading him with curses.

As in the Garden of Olives, so here again he considers the multitude of impenitent sinners who will refuse to profit by his sacrifice. At this thought his

soul is abandoned to desolation, and his strength failing him, he falls at the feet of the soldiers, who are preparing for his bloody execution.

It was the custom in those days, before crucifying the condemned, to give them a draught of wine and myrrh, to dull their sensibility to the torments about to be inflicted on them. This potion should have been given to Jesus: but alas! consistently with their previous cruelty, the Jews gave him gall and vinegar, thus fulfilling the words of David: "They gave me gall for my food."¹ Yet our Savior does not refuse that bitter draught. He tastes it to expiate our sins of sensuality; but he will not drink it, lest anything may lessen the sufferings by which he desires to make satisfaction for our sins.

Meanwhile the signal is given to execute the cruel warrant granted by Pilate; whereupon the executioners brutally lay hold of the divine criminal and tear off his garments. O who can conceive what Jesus suffers from this barbarous stripping! His robe, the only covering of his divine body, is fastened to his adorable flesh by the blood that he has shed. In stripping him violently of the garment, the soldiers re-open his wounds, renew all the tortures of the scourging, and inflict upon him such pain as we shudder even to think of. To the sufferings of his body are added the more painful afflictions of his soul. To what a fearful state is Jesus reduced! to what an abyss of humiliation he has sunk!

Behold him, Christian souls, a Victim that having been flayed before being immolated, now lies panting

¹Ps. lxxviii. 22.

at the foot of the altar of sacrifice. His sacred members are a shapeless mass of mangled flesh; his divine blood streams from every pore; his whole body is one vast wound.

Alas! He who gives the meadows their verdure and adorns them with flowers, who gives the birds their plumage, and the sun its splendor, has not a rag to cover him! The King of earth, the Master of heaven, has for his royal mantle only the wounds inflicted on him, and the blood that oozes therefrom. Angels of heaven, hasten to your Lord! cover his divine body with your wings; hide it from the eyes of those wretched blasphemers who so shamefully outrage him whom you profoundly adore as the very Splendor of God.

Jesus does not consent to receive the visible assistance of the angels. He wishes to expiate our misfortune in losing, by sin, the robe of innocence wherewith we were clothed in baptism. The precious garment had been given us by our mother the Holy Church, just as his own tunic had been given him by his immaculate mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. He wishes to show us the misery of the soul that no longer wears the robe of grace; and his own intense grief when by their vices and impiety he is driven from souls which, if united to him by charity, would be, as it were, a glorious garment for his mystic body. He wishes also to show us to what degree he practised poverty; since at his death, as at his birth, he was wholly destitute of earthly goods. He presses men to renounce all generously, and to strip themselves of earthly things, that they may become like unto him and apply to themselves the merits of his sacrifice.

APPLICATION

How many lessons our divine Master gives us in this circumstance of his dolorous Passion! Let us not fail to study and apply them. Let us deplore our sins which have stripped us of the robe of innocence, ravished our souls of their beauty, and rendered them an object of horror in the sight of God. On the day of our baptism, the Church exhorted us to preserve with care the white robe wherewith she had clothed us; but alas! by sin we have torn it off and cast it from us. Let us, by a true conversion, hasten to clothe ourselves with it anew. Let us embrace with courage the practice of penance, that second baptism, by which, through the mercy of God, we have been restored to the dignity of children of God and heirs of heaven.

Let us be resigned in our trials, whatsoever they be. Let us recall Jesus suffering, and imitate him. We have contemplated him, enduring silently and patiently the most intolerable pains and the most humiliating opprobrium. O how he condemns our impatience and our fastidiousness!

Let us faithfully cherish religious poverty. Let us often reflect that Jesus allowed himself to be stripped, to merit for those whom he calls to his service the grace to renounce entirely all earthly goods, to put on his livery, to wear it as becomes his disciples, to observe in its full extent the precept of St. Paul, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."¹

Let us bear in mind that every man must inevitably be stripped of everything, whether involuntarily, by the

¹Rom. xiii. 14.

accidents of life and by death, or voluntarily, by penance and mortification. Let us consider the precious advantages of the second of these despoilments, and let us generously strive for them. Let us labor unceasingly to strip ourselves of self-seeking, of our passions and our self-love, that we may imitate Jesus Christ, who is our model on earth, and who shall be our reward in heaven.

PRAYER

Divine Jesus, spotless Lamb! who, to expiate our misfortune in losing thy grace, didst subject thyself to so many sorrows and humiliations, how can we repay thy infinite generosity? In no other way, dear Lord, than by trying to become like unto thee, stripping ourselves entirely of self-love, pride and sensuality; practising humility and mortification, and guarding against the loss of the precious gift of innocence which thou hast bestowed upon us.

O Mary, our Mother! help us to preserve that sacred robe wherewith we must be clothed if we would enter heaven; that nuptial garment wherewith we must be adorned to be admitted to the eternal banquet, and share in the wedding feast of the Lamb, who, to merit for us that signal favor, suffered unheard of pains and inconceivable humiliations!

Résumé, page 402.

The Victim has come to the place of immolation; the last preparations are making.

1. The executioners present Jesus with vinegar and gall.

2. He tastes it, in order to expiate our sensuality.

3. They afterwards seize him violently.

4. They brutally tear off his clothes, which, owing to the blood that had flowed from his wounds, adhere to his flesh.

5. They thus renew all the torments of the scourging.

—Let us reflect that he willed to suffer all this,

1. To expiate the sins which have stripped us of the robe of innocence.

2. To merit for us the blessing of being clothed anew with the robes of grace.

3. To teach us patience.

4. To teach us poverty and detachment from all things.

5. To teach us detachment from ourselves.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION

THE CRUCIFIXION

They crucified him.—Luke xxiii. 33.

CONSIDERATION

For more than four thousand years, divine justice awaited on Calvary the solemn expiation of man's sin. At last the hour has come, the Victim is ready, the altar is prepared, the sacrifice is about to be accomplished. Jesus raises his eyes to heaven, then casts them on the cross beside him, and stretching himself on that bed of pain and ignominy, presents his hands and his feet to the executioners who are going to pierce them.

O Christian souls, come to your beloved Lord! Contemplate your august Victim in this moment of supreme torture. Consider his immolation on a mountain where all men may witness it; assist at the most harrowing spectacle ever seen on earth; place yourselves in front and view closely this heart-rending scene. Behold the executioners pitilessly seizing the right hand of Jesus, and placing it roughly on the wood of the cross. Then one of them, by repeated blows of the hammer, pierces it with a large nail. O who can understand the sufferings of our divine Savior at this moment! The very thought of them makes us shudder, and fills our imagination with horrible pictures.

But let us turn away neither our imagination nor our thoughts from the subject. Let us, on the contrary, contemplate with pity and attention the horribly mangled hand of Jesus fastened to the cross, his bent fingers, his shattered nerves, his blood flowing from the torn veins, his contracted arm, his stiffening body, his head racked with pain. Let us read in his face and in his tearful eyes, what his immaculate body suffers to expiate the sins of our guilty flesh.

And yet this, so far from being all that Jesus submits to endure on this occasion, is only the beginning of his torments. His executioners continue their bloody work. They seize his left arm which he abandons to their cruelty; they pull it violently to force it to the place where it is to be fastened, and by that tension, the very thought of which makes us shudder, they enlarge the wound in his right hand, dislocate his bones, and cause him excruciating pain. Then they nail the left hand as they had done the right. And thus, O Lord! thy divine hands that had wrought so many prodigies, that had made heaven and earth, are mangled, pierced, and fastened to the cross by man, who is their work and for whom thou didst perform thy miracles,—and this near Jerusalem, among the very people, nay by that people, whose guide thou hast been, and upon whom thou hast bestowed innumerable blessings! O grievous disorder! O base ingratitude! more painful to thy soul than even the torments of thy divine body.

Meanwhile the executioners seize the feet of Jesus, those beautiful feet which, according to the expression of the prophet,¹ had brought peace to many, those feet

¹Isai. lii. 7.

in whose steps so many unfortunates had followed, those feet which were so often wearied in seeking sinners and consoling the afflicted. The executioners pull his feet violently, and thus dislocate the bones that were not already out of joint; and taking an enormous nail, they drive it, by repeated blows, through both feet, and for the third time cause the Savior cruel suffering.

Hearken, Christian souls! hearken to those dismal strokes, heard distinctly by the now silent crowd, echoing so mournfully in the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother. O weep with her, weep for her sorrows; but weep also for yourselves and for your sins, which are the cause of the sufferings of both Jesus and Mary on Calvary.

The Victim is now nailed to the wood of immolation. The prophecy which our divine Savior had spoken by the mouth of David is now literally accomplished: "They have dug my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones"¹ O Jesus, adorable Master, deign, we beseech thee, to teach us why thou wouldst suffer such cruel torments. It is because thou art the expiatory Victim of all our sins, which are, alas! innumerable. Thy feet are pierced because we have strayed from the way of virtue. Thy hands are pierced to atone for the sins which ours have committed. Alas! how great is their number! How many times they have been multiplied from the day when Eve stretched out her guilty hand to the forbidden fruit, to this hour of darkness in which thy executioners have laid their sacrilegious hands on thy sacred body! And how vastly

¹Ps. xxi. 17, 18.

will their numbers be increased up to that moment when Antichrist shall insolently raise his hand against heaven! Lord, I now understand, it is in thy hands thou dost endure thy greatest exterior sufferings!

APPLICATION

In union with Mary on Calvary, let us compassionate the sufferings of Jesus. Let the blows that fall upon him re-echo in our hearts. It is for us he suffers; let us then suffer with him. Let us bless him for offering himself a sacrifice for our salvation. With all the saints, let us magnify the love which led him to give himself up in our place, to satisfy divine justice for our sins. As we recall the pains of his crucifixion, let us deplore our wanderings from the way of virtue, and the many sins of which our hands have been the instruments. Let us never forget how much Jesus suffered to expiate them.

Let us also bear in mind that Christ crucified is our model. But let us not be frightened at the thought. Our adorable Master does not call upon us to suffer torments like his; but were he to do so, he would himself give us strength to bear them all. But there is a cross to which we must be fastened, and whereon we must remain, subduing self by the desire of becoming like unto him. The cross for us religious is the accomplishment of our holy Rules; and the nails are not only obedience to our superiors, and gratitude and love for Jesus, but also the vows that we have made in order to assure our perseverance in his service.

Let us be faithful to these engagements; let us live

as becomes true religious. We shall thereby render ourselves conformed to the divine Model shown us on Calvary, and we shall secure our right to the celestial heritage which he merited for us by his sufferings and death.

Let the contemplation of his crucifixion be a source of courage to us in sickness; let us then cast our eyes on our divine Savior nailed to the cross, and reflect that the cross which he wills us to bear is the bed of pain to which we are confined. Let us esteem our resemblance to him as a real blessing, and unite our sufferings with his. Let us lovingly adore him nailed to the cross. Let us venerate the wounds in his hands and feet, and beg of him the grace to reproduce them mystically in ourselves by the practice of penance and mortification.

PRAYER

Behold me, O Jesus! near thy cross, weeping at the remembrance of thy sorrows and the thought of my sins which have caused them. O how cruel I have been to thee! Nevertheless, O my generous Redeemer, let me hope for pardon; for the wounds of thy hands and feet, which so eloquently reproach me with my crimes, also speak to me of confidence, for I know that by them thou hast expiated my iniquities. I may therefore regard them as the writing in thy blood, giving me a claim to thy mercy. I beseech thee, then, by thy divine wounds and by the sorrows of thy blessed Mother, to forget all my sins, and give me grace to be obedient to my superiors, faithful to my rule, crucified to the

world, and animated only with the desire of pleasing thee and persevering in thy holy service.

Résumé, page 403.

The solemn hour of expiation has come; everything is ready for the bloody sacrifice.

1. Jesus looks upon the cross at his side.
2. He approaches it.
3. He lies down on the infamous wood.
4. The executioners seize his hands and nail them to it.
5. They take his feet and nail them in like manner.

—O what torture he endures! What torture also Mary suffers!

1. Like her, let us compassionate Jesus crucified.
2. Let us bless him for his love for us.
3. Let us weep for our sins, which are his true executioners, and let us do penance for them.
4. In union with Jesus crucified, let us accept with resignation all the trials of life, all the inconveniences of our state.
5. Let us adore the Savior's wounds, and reproduce them in ourselves by the practice of mortification.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

JESUS RAISED ON THE CROSS

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up.—John iii. 14.

CONSIDERATION

Let us devoutly contemplate our divine Savior nailed to the cross and suffering the most cruel pains. Let us learn from his contracted features the violence of the torment which he endures; let us listen to his prolonged groanings; let us fix our eyes on his pierced hands and feet, and follow the course of the blood that streams from them as from four inexhaustible fountains. Let us learn thence the greatness of his love for us and the infinite price of our redemption. And yet, how far he still is from exhausting the sufferings to which he has resigned himself for our salvation!

He is fastened to the cross; but the cross must be placed erect, for the altar of the great sacrifice must be elevated to present to all men the Lamb immolated for their salvation. The Mediator between God and man must be placed between heaven and earth; the Light of nations must be raised on high; the Son of man must be lifted up, that from the height of his gibbet he may draw all things to himself. By that painful and ignominious exposure he must also expiate the sins of pride by which we have sought to make

ourselves conspicuous and raise ourselves above others. Yes, the cross must be elevated; but alas! at the cost of what suffering for Jesus!

Let us mentally assist at the elevation of the august Victim; let us witness the uplifting of the cross. Let us see how its foot is placed against a rock, how it is gradually raised by means of cords and ladders, and how when raised, it is slid along until it falls with all its weight into the hole prepared to receive it.

O who can tell what Jesus endures from this horrible shock! how his pierced hands are torn! how the wounds in his feet are enlarged! The imagination cannot picture, the intellect cannot fathom, the abyss of his torture. Never before did the sun shine on a scene so heart-rending, from which it is about to veil its light in horror!

And when I reflect that he who suffers thus is my God, my Master, and my Savior, that he suffers in my place and on my account, I know not on what sentiment to dwell. I am filled with confusion and sorrow for my faults, with love and gratitude for his goodness. Everything urges me to cast myself at the foot of the cross on Calvary, and there pour forth my tears.

But that the contemplation of this mystery of inconceivable torment may produce salutary fruit in you and me, let us dwell on the other reflections which it suggests. This elevation of Jesus on the cross had been foretold, for the prophets had seen "the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of people;"¹ and, as Jesus himself tells us, it had been prefigured by the serpent which Moses raised in the desert: "As Moses lifted up

¹Isai. xi. 10.

the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up.”¹

The cross is elevated on a mountain, in the middle of the day, on the eve of the most solemn Sabbath, before people of all nations, to show that all that have been bitten by the infernal serpent, must look with faith on the divine Crucified if they would be healed of the wounds in their souls. If the sight of the brazen serpent, which was only a figure of the Redeemer, was so efficacious in curing the Israelites who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, how much more will the contemplation of Jesus on the cross remedy the evil done us by the devil!

Our divine Savior, uplifted on the tree of ignominy, expiates that pride whereby we raise ourselves above our brethren. At the same time he teaches us in what that elevation consists which is allowable and to which, if we cherish in our souls the holy ambition of resembling our Savior, we should even aspire.

Yes, it is by the cross that man is really elevated; it is on the cross that he shows himself truly great, and it is only when he has been exposed thereon to the eyes of all men, that he becomes entirely worthy of esteem. Let us then desire to be elevated on the cross in union with our adorable Master. Nature may, indeed, revolt at the thought; but Jesus elevated on the cross has merited for us the grace of triumphing over nature. He calls us to offer ourselves on the cross with him, that thus in union with him we may be made, as St. Paul says, “a spectacle to the world.”² And not only will he have us religious to be nailed with him

¹John iii. 14.

²1 Cor. iv. 9.

to his dolorous cross, but he calls upon all men to make the sacrifice, for he says: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."¹

To inculcate upon all generations this necessity of raising themselves on the cross with their Redeemer, the mystery of the elevation of Jesus on the cross is constantly recalled to Christians by the crucifix, which the Church everywhere places before their eyes. Furthermore, this elevation is mysteriously continued in the holy sacrifice of the mass: three times does the priest hold aloft the saving Victim for the adoration of the faithful, and thus recall the elevation of the same Victim on Calvary.

APPLICATION

Let us often look upon Jesus nailed to the cross, and think of what he suffers and why he suffers. Let us grieve over the pain that he endures and, remembering that our sins have caused it, let us be penetrated with sentiments of the most bitter repentance.

Let us be humble, modest, and resigned: let us seek no other elevation than that of the cross. Let us say with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."² Let us frequently recall to mind the elevation of Jesus on the cross, but particularly at the moment when the priest elevates the consecrated host and the chalice.

Let devotion to the cross be ever dear to us; for the crucifix is the most eloquent of books. It speaks in moving language to our senses, our mind, and our

¹John xii. 32.

²Gal. vi. 14.

heart. It expresses all Christ's sentiments, it teaches all his doctrines, it answers all our queries. It consoles us in the deepest affliction; inspires us to the most heroic virtue; it teaches us charity, patience, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies.

Let us bear the cross constantly about with us; let us give it a place of honor in every apartment of the house; let us respectfully salute it when we meet it in city or country.

Let us train our pupils to be devout to the crucifix: let us teach them to read that book, which proclaims so eloquently the love of Jesus for us and the price that he paid for our souls. Let us persuade them to carry about them and place near their beds that ever blessed image, which they can never sufficiently venerate. May the sight of the crucifix excite in them and us the most lively confidence, and develop all the love wherewith our hearts ought to be inflamed for Jesus.

O crucifix! O sweet image of my Savior! O book of the Christian! thou shalt ever be dear to me; I shall ever have thee about me, and keep thee near my bed. Often will I kiss thee with love and respect; and when my last moment comes, it is to thee that I will give up my last sigh, it is in thee that my soul will find strength to overcome the devil and ascend to that abode whither my Savior draws all that are his.

PRAYER

O Jesus! who wouldst be exposed, as a sign of hope, to the view of all nations, permit me to hope in thee! I contemplate thee nailed to the cross, and I recall all the

pains which thou didst endure thereon, and remembering that thou didst endure them for my salvation, I dare confide in thy mercy. Thou didst say that when thou wast uplifted from the earth, thou wouldst draw all things to thyself: thou wilt then save me, O generous Redeemer! Thou wilt not permit so many toils and sufferings to be fruitless for a soul which aspires to follow thee, to be united with thee here below in thy sufferings and thy crucifixion, that it may be united with thee in heaven in thy infinite glory.

Résumé, page 403.

A victim for all men, the Mediator between them and his Father, Jesus wills to be lifted up between heaven and earth.

Let us consider what takes place on this occasion.

1. The executioners bring the cross to the place where it is to be raised.

2. They fasten it with cords.

3. They raise it little by little.

4. Soon it is upright.

5. All at once it falls with a jerk into the hole prepared for it.

—What a frightful shock was thus caused Jesus! How he suffered in his hands and in his feet!

1. Let us compassionate his sufferings.

2. Let us weep over our sins, which caused them.

3. Let us desire for ourselves no other elevation than that which comes by the cross.

4. Let us often, and particularly at the elevation of the Host, adore Jesus raised upon the cross.

5. Let us have a true devotion to the crucifix, and neglect no means of inspiring our pupils with this devotion.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION

JESUS ON THE CROSS

The root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of people.—
Isai. xi. 10.

CONSIDERATION

Let us go in spirit to Calvary, and kneeling at the foot of the cross, contemplate the adorable Victim of our redemption on the altar of sacrifice. What a picture is presented to our eyes! To what a state of suffering in body and soul our beloved Savior is reduced! Let us behold him hanging between heaven and earth, fastened by enormous nails to an infamous gibbet, his body naked, mangled, bleeding, covered with wounds from head to foot. Let us view his immaculate flesh cruelly torn, his bones disjointed and laid bare, so that, according to the expression of the prophet, they may be “numbered.”¹ Let us behold his august head crowned with thorns, his face besmeared with blood which, still streaming from his brow, mingles with his sweat and his tears. Let us look upon his languid eyes, his contracted lips, and his inflamed mouth which utters sighs and groans so pitiful as to soften the hardest heart.

Let us, with the liveliest compassion, consider his pierced hands and feet, and the fearful wounds which

¹Ps. xxi. 18.

the nails have made and from which, as also from the prints of the crown of thorns, the blood, oozing drop by drop, causes him inconceivable torture. If he would support his weight by his feet, he has, alas! no other means than the nail that pierces them. If he would rest on his hands, he enlarges their wounds, and produces the most painful tension in his arms; moreover, his chest heaves, and his breathing becomes more and more labored. If he allows his head to bend forward, he adds to the weight of his body and increases the opening in his lacerated hands. If he raises it, he presses the crown of thorns against the wood of the cross, and drives the sharp points farther in. Thus there is nothing for him but pain, without any possible alleviation! Great God! what a situation! And it is Jesus, our adorable Savior, who has vouchsafed to endure this for our sakes!

But who can conceive what he suffers in his soul? He is crucified between two thieves, one on his right and the other on his left, that he may be pointed out as a notorious malefactor, and, as he had himself foretold by Isaiah, that he may be “reputed with the wicked!” O God! to what fellowship is he condemned who is the Figure of thy substance, and who reigneth with thee in the same unity of nature! O what shame and ignominy for him! To what destitution he is reduced! to what an outrage he is subjected!

When a man is about to enter into his agony, every one is ready to bestow on him all possible care and attention, to comfort and encourage him in those trying moments, and to show him love and pity. But for

¹Isai. liii. 12; Mark xv. 28.

Jesus there is no such manifestation, except from his blessed Mother, St. John, and the holy women, whose presence is to him, in one respect, rather a subject of great pain than of consolation. Everything that surrounds him tends to fill his mind with sorrowful thoughts, and burdens his heart with bitter anguish. He suffers, through compassion, all the affliction of Mary, the beloved disciple, and the holy women. He sees his enemies insolently despising him, cursing him, wagging their heads at him, and ridiculing his tortures. He listens to their words, and hears only the most cruel mockery, the grossest insults, abusive epithets, cries of blasphemy, and loud bursts of derisive laughter, mingled with the groans of his divine Mother.

Into what an ocean of bitterness he is plunged! And yet this is not all! Jesus sees not only the present, but all the future to the end of time; and he knows how small a portion of the almost infinite number of men who are yet to be born, will really be his friends: all the others he foresees will inherit the hatred of the Jews for his person, his doctrine, and his Church. They will refuse to apply to themselves the merits of his sacrifice, and will run to their eternal ruin, notwithstanding all he has done to save them. They will trample with sacrilegious indifference on the blood which he sheds in torrents for them. They will transmit from generation to generation a fatal heritage of vice and error, deny the truths that he has taught, despise his morality, mock his cross, and continue to heap on the Church, his mystic body, the outrages wherewith the princes of the synagogue now overwhelm his person. How great, then, must have been the pains

of his soul, how terrible the affliction of his divine heart during his agony on the cross!

APPLICATION

This picture of the sufferings of Jesus thrills our inmost being. Let us reflect that he endures them for love of us miserable sinners, whose hearts he wishes to gain, and for whom he has substituted himself to satisfy the justice of his Father. Let us bear in mind that he endures them in order to induce us to hate and avoid sin, which is their cause, and to teach us patience, resignation, and courage in trials. Let us understand the duties which they impose on us, and accomplish them cheerfully and faithfully.

Let us love Jesus, who has so loved us as to sacrifice himself for our salvation. Let us love him with our whole heart, and prove our sincerity by giving him our fondest affection and devoting ourselves unreservedly to his service.

Let us often contemplate him immolating himself on the cross. Let us correspond with the intention of the Church, who wishes us to esteem the crucifix as the most precious ornament of our dwellings, to carry it constantly about us, to place it along the streets and roads, that we may unceasingly think of the adorable Victim of our redemption.

Let the sight of Jesus on the cross inspire us with true repentance, since it is on account of our sins that the God of love suffers and dies. Let us weep over our misfortune in committing them, and mingle our tears with the blood which he sheds to expiate them. Let

us likewise learn from the crucifix the cost of grace; let us set an infinite value on that treasure, which the Son of God valued more than life, and for the purchase of which he suffered inconceivable pains.

Let the sight of Jesus on the cross inspire us with patience in the ills and adversities of life: for what are our troubles compared with his? Can we still refuse to accept them, after having considered him suffering every pain and every sorrow? But it is not enough to excite ourselves to patience; we must bear in mind that Jesus on the cross is the model to which all the elect must be conformed. Yes, Christian souls, he is the heavenly spouse whom you must resemble. Raise yourselves, then, by grace above nature; and, notwithstanding your repugnance, love, desire, and seek the pains and trials of life, because by them especially will you succeed in reproducing in yourselves the lineaments of your beloved Savior, and really manifest your love for him.

PRAYER

O my crucified Jesus! how great have been thy sorrows, and how generous has been thy love for us! Thy hands, thy feet, thy head, all in thee and about thee, tell me what thou hast deigned to suffer for my sake. Why, then, O Jesus, hast thou loved me to such an excess? What didst thou see in me that thou shouldst sacrifice thyself without pity either for thyself or thy blessed Mother? Thou answerest me from thy cross, that thou didst see what I might become by the graces which thou hast merited for me by thy sufferings. Give

me then, O Lord, I beseech thee, the courage, the generosity, and the strength of mind, necessary to correspond with them.

Thou dost offer me the grace of sorrow for my sins. Grant that I may weep for them, and that my tears, like those of Magdalen at the foot of the cross, may mingle with thy blood and obtain my pardon. Thou dost offer me also the grace of thy divine love; grant, then, that I may love thee, O my good Master! Thou didst say that when thou wast lifted up from earth, thou wouldst draw all things to thyself. Draw me, then, to thee as thou art nailed to the cross, and grant that I may be evermore united to thee.

Résumé, page 404.

Let us contemplate Jesus on the cross.

What sorrows he experiences!

1. His body is one great wound. His head is crowned with thorns. His hands and feet are pierced.

2. He has no other support than the nails which fasten him to the cross.

3. In his compassion for Mary he feels all her sorrows.

4. His ears catch no sounds but the insults and blasphemies of his enemies.

5. His heart is breaking at the thought of the great number of sinners who will be lost in spite of what he is suffering to save them.

He suffers all, from all, without any consolation.

—He suffers it,

1. Through love for us.

2. To merit pardon for us.

3. To win our hearts.

4. To lead us to hate and shun sin.

5. To teach us patience and resignation.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—
Luke xxiii. 34.

CONSIDERATION

O Christian souls, contemplate your God fastened to the cross, lifted up between heaven and earth, and teaching men by his example the sublime precept of forgiveness of injuries and love of enemies—a precept which was unknown before his coming, but which he taught in these words: “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.”¹

His enemies surround him like furious bulls;² they delight in outraging him; they express hatred and contempt in their every word. The soldiers insult him and divide his garments among them; the mob, excited by the synagogue, blaspheme him; the chief priests, the doctors of the law, and the ancients of the people, mingle with the multitude, and mock him in the most cruel and humiliating manner. The passers-by wag their heads and heap curses upon him, and all bid him come down from the cross if he be the Son of God, or if God protects him,—all dare to say that he is not Christ, since he does not, by his deliverance, answer

¹Matt. v. 44.

²Ps. xxi. 13.

their sacrilegious challenge. They manifest for him neither pity nor humanity. He hears nothing but mockery, reproach, insult, and blasphemy.

How many motives has he not now for hurling signal vengeance on his enemies! His dignity outraged, God his Father offended, and offended by deicide; all justice set at nought, insults without number heaped on an innocent Victim who suffers, without a murmur, the most cruel torments—does not all this impel him to cry out, as did the high priest Zachary, immolated between the altar and the temple: “The Lord see and require it?”¹

But he will not act thus. Heeding nothing but his infinite goodness, he has only heavenly graces for his enemies. He opens his divine mouth and utters those sublime words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

O my dear Lord, is this what thy heart inspires in such circumstances? Thy enemies curse thee, and thou answerest with blessings; they calumniate thee, and thou offerest excuses for them; they put thee to a most infamous death, and, when about to undergo it, thou prayest for thy persecutors and thine executioners! O Lord! no man could act thus: thou art indeed God, and I adore thee as such. Hadst thou spoken but these words, they would suffice to establish thy divinity. Oh! help me to penetrate their meaning during this meditation, that I may enter into the sprit of this mystery, and may learn to know the perfections of thy sacred heart.

Jesus had kept silence while they accused and con-

demned him and even while they crucified him. He thus acquitted himself in a sublime manner of his august character of Victim, and remained dumb as a lamb before his shearer;¹ but being not only the Victim but the Priest of the sacrifice, he had also to pray and to give instruction. Hence he now speaks from the height of the cross, in the attitude of a priest at the altar; and his first word is at once a most admirable and efficacious prayer, and a most salutary lesson. Forgetting that it is *by* his enemies he suffers, he remembers only that it is *for* them he offers his sacrifice. "Father," he says, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

How eloquent is that supplication, and how admirably fitted to attain its object! Jesus says, "Father," and not "God," to appeal more directly to the heart of him whom he addresses. He asks pardon for his enemies in a precise, definitive manner—*Forgive them*,—but he makes only a vague allusion to the crime for which he asks pardon; and even without naming it, he hastens to excuse it on the score of the ignorance of those by whom it is committed.

O how great, how charitable, and how generous is our Pontiff, the Priest of the New Law, who, entirely forgetting himself, thinks only of us at the altar of sacrifice!

But it was not only on the cross that Jesus solicited our pardon; as eternal Priest, he unceasingly pleads with his Father for the pardon of sinners. At all times, but especially in the holy sacrifice of the mass, he repeats the same prayer, "Father, forgive them;" nor

¹Isai. liii. 7.

will he cease to repeat it so long as pardon may come from heaven to earth.

There are also other points from which the charity of Jesus is manifest in that prayer which he offers as priest, and which is the subject of our meditation. While subjected to cruel outrage, he thinks not of himself, but of the insult offered to God his Father, and the misfortune of those who are its authors. He is afflicted at the sin of deicide, the enormity of which he comprehends, and at the curses drawn down on their own heads by those who commit the crime. But he cherishes no desire of revenge, no hatred, no ill-will. He opens his heart to no sentiments but those of ardent love for his enemies, even at the very moment when he sees them abandoning themselves to the dictates of the most intense and the most unjust hatred. He asks pardon for them by the very blood which he sheds at their hands, and he asks it with "prayer and supplication, with a strong cry and tears."¹

O inconceivable goodness! O unparalleled generosity! O infinite charity!

APPLICATION

Let us often think of Jesus crucified, praying for his executioners, and let us model our conduct on that of our adorable Master. After such an example, can we cherish in our hearts hatred, desire of revenge, even the slightest rancor or resentment? If so, can we dare call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ? And by what pretence of self-love can we justify resentment? What

¹Heb. v. 7.

are we in comparison with the Son of God, whom we have contemplated forgiving those even who crucified him? What are our injuries in comparison with the outrages which he underwent, and the ignominious death which he suffered? .

Nature inclines us to exaggerate the wrongs done us by our neighbor; let us ask of Jesus nailed to the cross the grace to triumph over nature. Let us under all circumstances be animated with sentiments of the most generous charity towards all. If any one offend us, let us forgive him with all our heart; and if we cannot excuse the action, let us at least excuse the intention. Let us forgive all and always. Let us do more; let us pray God to forgive and enrich with his graces every person against whom we feel resentment, envy, or even dislike.

Let us cherish a firm hope of being ourselves forgiven, since we know that on the cross Jesus prayed for us, and that God has heard his prayer; but let us not forget that the pardon which he merited and asked for us, can be granted only to hearts that are truly contrite and are merciful towards their neighbor.

PRAYER

O Jesus, who, from the height of the cross dost pray for thy enemies, share with us thy goodness, and thy charity. We are thy disciples, grant, then, that we may be really thy imitators.

“Take from our hearts, O Lord, all suspicion, indignation, anger, and contention, and whatever else may wound charity and lessen brotherly love,”¹ that we may

¹Imitation, Bk. iv. ch. ix. 6.

repeat with confidence the prayer which thou hast taught us: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."¹

Résumé, page 404.

Behold how Jesus avenges himself! His heart can only pardon his enemies and pray for them.

1. "My Father," he exclaims, "my Father!"

2. "Forgive them!"

3. Forgive all: the chief priests, Herod, Pilate, my executioners!

4. Forgive these erring people.

5. "They know not what they do."

O infinite goodness! O unparalleled generosity of Jesus.

—What an example for us!

1. Let us often recall it; let us imitate it.

2. Let us never cherish resentment; let us generously pardon all offences.

3. Let us excuse the intention, if we cannot excuse the deed.

4. Let us always return good for evil.

5. Let us bless Jesus praying for us upon the cross and in the holy sacrifice, and asking of his Father the pardon of our sins.

¹Matt. vi. 12.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION

JESUS PROMISES HEAVEN TO THE GOOD THIEF

This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.—Luke xxiii. 43.

CONSIDERATION

The holy Gospel mentions among those who outraged Jesus fastened to the cross, the thieves who were crucified with him; and records the words of one of them who said: “If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us.”¹ Thus a vile wretch, a felon, repeats the insults of the Jewish priests, and calls on Jesus to prove his divinity by coming down from the cross. This unhappy man, instead of preparing for death, heaps insults upon him who, in a few moments, is to judge him and pass sentence upon him for all eternity.

Meanwhile the other thief is suddenly enlightened from on high; and, docile to the grace given him through the merits of the blood of the innocent Victim, recognizes in Christ his Lord and his God. Filled with zeal for the glory of our divine Savior, he rebukes his companion for his injustice: “Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation. And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done no evil.” Then turning towards Jesus, he adds: “Lord, remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.”²

¹Luke xxiii. 39.

²Luke xxiii. 40-42.

O admirable words! O prodigy of grace! can this be the criminal who but a moment ago was himself insulting the divine Victim? His language now shows that he has all the virtues that make sincere penitents. He has the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom,¹ and he seeks to inspire his companion with it: "Neither dost thou fear God." He has the zeal of an apostle, and his zeal proves the sincerity of his conversion. He is humble and contrite, loudly confessing his sins and accepting, in expiation, the torments which he endures on the cross. He is full of hope, and perfectly resigned to the will of God.

What is especially admirable in him, is the faith which he professes openly and solemnly. How sublime it is! how lofty! how well it proves the prodigious, nay, the supreme, efficacy of grace! For what does he see in the external appearance of Jesus? A man fastened like himself to an ignominious gibbet, subjected to outrage, covered with shame and opprobrium, naked, crowned with thorns, suffering extreme exhaustion, and dying the death of a felon! And yet in this man he confesses Christ, the Son of the living God; he venerates him as a King on his throne; he pays him as profound adoration as if he contemplated him radiant with divine splendor!

When the apostles, who had seen the dead come forth from the grave at the voice of Jesus, are shaken in their faith, a thief who sees him subjected to the same torture with himself, confesses his divinity; and that at the very moment when the chief priests and the ancients of the people blaspheme the adorable Savior of mankind,

¹Ps. cx. 10.

and insult him as though he had been the most wicked of men!

Let us admire this miracle of our Lord's infinite goodness. At the very moment when he is subjected to the sacrilegious insults of his enemies, he forgets himself to attend to the salvation of souls, and offers one of the crucified thieves a powerful grace to which the latter promptly corresponds.

Jesus is not ashamed to speak to a criminal justly condemned to capital punishment, and with surprising generosity to promise him: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise;" I will have thee for my companion and my friend when I enter heaven. What condescension! what charity! The penitent thief asks only a remembrance; and on that very day Jesus grants him a throne in his kingdom and promises him infinite happiness. O happy thief! bless in the highest heavens him who has dealt mercifully with thee, and in union with all holy penitents celebrate his infinite goodness and clemency.

Alas! the companion of thy sins and thy torments does not imitate thee; he rejects the mercy which is offered also to him; and, through his own fault, he is doomed to manifest, in time and in eternity, the terrible justice exercised by the Supreme Judge on those who refuse to acknowledge him for their King.

On the cross then, Jesus shows himself to be King of kings and Author of goodness, giving, on the one hand, an everlasting kingdom to a penitent thief, but, on the other, as sovereign Judge, condemning to condign punishment him who persists in resisting grace! The dread office which he exercises on Calvary, he still exercises and

will continue to exercise till the last day. At every moment, he says to some penitent soul about to die: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise;" and every moment, alas! he gives up to their reprobate sense, those who resist his final graces and so prefer death in sin to their conversion. But he will pronounce sentence on all men, on the last day, when, seated on a throne of glory, with the good on his right and the wicked on his left, he shall say to the former: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you;" and to the latter: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."²

APPLICATION

This meditation ought to excite in us two opposite sentiments—confidence and fear. Whatsoever may be a man's sins, he may always hope for mercy, and obtain it by a generous correspondence with grace. Even though he have wasted his life in crime, and be about to appear before his Judge, he may still say with the Church in the Office for the Dead: "Thou, . . . by the absolving of the thief, hast given me hope."³ And if this be true for even the most infamous sinners, how great should be the confidence of a religious who has always cherished in his heart the desire of possessing God and promoting his glory!

Nevertheless, the subject on which we are meditating may well inspire us with salutary fear: for this is the only instance of a great sinner converted at death, which

¹Matt. xxv. 34.

²*Ibid.* 41.

³Prose *Dies iræ*.

is clearly mentioned in Holy Scripture. If, in considering the great mercy shown to the good thief, our hearts are buoyed up by unbounded hope; nevertheless, reflecting on the fate of his companion in torment, we should be penetrated with fear: for he, too, was crucified with Jesus, witnessed his patience, was included in his prayer, associated in his sacrifice, placed near Mary at a short distance from the Savior's cross, perhaps even sprinkled with the blood of redemption. And yet on the very day when earth is reconciled with heaven, and divine grace flows in torrents, he becomes obdurate and is lost, notwithstanding the movements of grace and the rebuke of the penitent thief. Yes, let us hope, since the good thief was converted at the very hour of his death; but let us also fear, for, under the same circumstances, the bad thief was lost!

Let us be docile to the salutary invitations of grace, which never fails us; let us promptly correspond to its inspirations. Let us practise as we ought, the virtues manifested by the penitent thief: fear of God, zeal, humility, contrition, hope, resignation. We shall thus merit to hear Jesus one day address to us, likewise, those words of supreme felicity: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

PRAYER

O dear Jesus, my crucified God, look down with compassion on my terror-stricken soul. O how much I dread becoming one day thy enemy, and, like the bad thief, disowning thee and dying in my sin! Lord, I beseech thee by thy cross and by thy blood, have mercy on

me and inspire me with the sentiments of the good thief. I, too, O my generous Redeemer, entreat thee to remember me in thy kingdom and to call me to reign there with thee. This favor I ask thee through the intercession of thy divine Mother, and in the name of the sufferings which she endured at the foot of thy cross.

Résumé, page 405.

Jesus crucified is exposed to the insults of his enemies and even to those of the thieves crucified with him.

1. One of them repeats the insults of the Jews.

2. But the other, suddenly converted, reproves his companion.

3. He proclaims the innocence and sanctity of Jesus.

4. "Lord," he continues, "remember me when thou shalt come into thine kingdom."

5. Jesus hears his prayer: "This day," he replies, "thou shalt be with me in paradise."

—In accordance with the spirit of this mystery,

1. Let us adore Jesus as a bountiful King.

2. Let us admire the prodigy of grace which he works.

3. Let us have the most entire confidence in him.

4. Let us urgently entreat him to remember us in his kingdom.

5. Let us admire and imitate the virtues manifested in the good thief—fear of God, zeal, humility, contrition, hope, resignation, sublime faith.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

JESUS GIVES US MARY FOR OUR MOTHER

Woman, behold thy son.—John xix. 26.

CONSIDERATION

Let us contemplate our adorable Redeemer on the cross about to consummate his immolation. Let us adore him in union with Mary, the beloved disciple, and the holy women who have followed him to Calvary and stand as near him as the guards will permit. Let us hearken to the new and mysterious words which fall from his divine lips, and reflect on the circumstances in which he pronounces them.

He is fastened naked to the cross, shedding drop by drop the little blood which he still possesses. From the moment when, by anticipation, he gave himself to his disciples in instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist, he sacrificed all; but the time now approaches when he will give up life itself.

Mary is standing near the cross, contemplating her divine Son a prey to every torture, regarding one by one the wounds wherewith he is covered, listening to his every sigh, compassionating all his sufferings and humiliations, immersed in bitter grief. She is crucified with her son. What agony! dying she lives, yet living she dies! Yes, in the agony of her maternal heart she dies a death more painful than that of nature.

While the new Adam is restoring what the first had destroyed, the new Eve is repairing the mischief wrought by the first. Jesus associates his Mother with himself; he allows her to share in the infinite sufferings by which he satisfies for the sins of mankind. She immolates herself with him and for us, and thereby co-operates in the work of our redemption. O Mary! who can comprehend thy desolation! It is "great as the sea,"¹ and high as the heavens. Thou, in truth, canst now say: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!"²

With Mary at the foot of the cross stands St. John, the beloved disciple, the virgin confidant of the heart of Jesus, the apostle of charity, who, at the Last Supper, reclined on the breast of his adorable Master. He alone, of all the apostles, ascended Calvary to share in the supreme sorrows of the divine Victim sacrificing himself for love of us.

With languid eyes that are soon to be closed in death, Jesus looks upon his blessed Mother and the beloved disciple; and addressing Mary, he says, indicating St. John: "Woman, behold thy Son." Then, turning to St. John, he adds: "Behold thy Mother."³ O words sublimely simple, expressive of infinite love, and productive of ineffable prodigies! Jesus makes St. John his substitute to care for his divine Mother, to protect and assist her as St. Joseph had done. He rewards the beloved disciple for his charity, his purity, and his fidelity, by giving him what he holds dearest in this world,—the Ark of the new covenant, the Treasure of heaven, the Queen of angels. What an inheritance! O how ten-

¹Lament. ii. 13.

²*Ibid.* i. 12.

³John xix. 26, 27.

der is the love of Jesus for his privileged disciple.

But how great, also, is his tenderness for us all, for to us also he gives Mary to be our mother! We were represented in the person of St. John. In accomplishing the work of redemption, Jesus kept constantly in view the men that he had come to ransom. When he prayed for his executioners, he prayed for all sinners; when he pardoned the good thief, he extended his mercy to all true penitents. So also when he gave Mary to St. John as a mother, he gave her to all the faithful. Yes, it is our welfare that is at stake. It is of us that Jesus thinks on the cross, even when he suffers his greatest torments, and when Mary suffers with him. He thinks of us, for he gives us his only remaining treasure, his own divine Mother; and it is to each one of us that he says: "Woman, behold thy son!"

Divine Savior, how sublimely thou fulfillest thy promise not to leave us orphans! Thou remainest with us in thy sacrament, O most loving of fathers, and thou givest us Mary for our mother! What have we, then, to desire, and why should we not unceasingly praise thy generosity?

Jesus said "Woman," and not "Mother," to remind us that he addresses himself to the woman of Scripture¹ by whose co-operation Eve's transgression was to be repaired. He wishes to give more ample proof that he is acting as God, and that he is about to pronounce a final sentence which he wishes to be fully executed. He would thereby effect a real substitution of man for himself, in virtue of which Mary is thenceforth to lavish all her affection on those whom he gives her as children.

¹Gen. iii. 15.

Such is indeed the case; the word of Jesus is divine and therefore sovereignly efficacious; it effects all that it signifies. Mary has no sooner heard it than she feels all the sentiments of tenderness, kindness and love, characteristic of a true mother. Her heart is enlarged to embrace all Christian generations in its affection; she feels that she is our mother, not only by appointment, but also by love and inclination. Behold her adopting us as children, and saying to Jesus in disposition as she had said to the angel Gabriel by word of mouth: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."¹ St. John, acting in our name, acknowledges her as his mother, and Jesus seals with his blood the contract of our glorious adoption.

APPLICATION

Jesus has given us his holy Mother to be our mother; what a motive for blessing him and celebrating his loving kindness! A mother is given to us, and that mother is Mary! Let us glory in our dignity as Christians, for by it we become children of Mary; what motives have we not for doing so? She who is our mother, is the Virgin Mother of God, the Queen of heaven and earth, the treasurer of grace, the highest, noblest, and most perfect of all creatures.

Mary is our Mother. Let us love her, after God, with all the love of which we are capable, and always show ourselves worthy of her. Let her image, her name, and her memory, be ever in our minds. Let us seek to please her alone, and, with that view let us accomplish

¹Luke i. 38.

faithfully what she enjoins by these words: "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye."¹

Let us often call to mind the circumstances of our adoption; and let the sorrows which she then endured, be the foundation of our filial love and the ground of our confidence. Mary not only loves us and desires our happiness; she has all power with her divine Son: for, in making her our mother he constituted her our protector. Let us therefore count on her assistance, and never cease to implore it.

But it is to us religious, as beloved disciples of our Savior, that Mary was particularly given as Mother. When he conferred on us the grace of our vocation, Jesus referred us to Mary in a special manner, saying: "Behold thy Mother." St. John's happiness is, therefore, ours also. Let us, then, appreciate it as he did, and like him devote ourselves to the glory of her whom we are so happy as to call our good Mother, and who ought therefore to be the object of our tenderest affection.

PRAYER

O Mary! remember that I became the child of thy sorrows on the day when Jesus, dying on the cross, revealed to us that thou art the Mother of all Christians. Oh! permit me to pour forth my heart into thine, and to say, and say unceasingly: "Yes, I love thee, I bless thee, O my good, gracious and tender Mother; permit me to give loving expression to the tenderness, devotion, and confidence of my soul for thee."

O Mary, who art still the Mother of our Lord Jesus

¹John ii. 5.

Christ and who hast all power over him, present to him our prayers and supplications. Ask him to hear us, for we are thy children and his adopted brothers. Obtain for us the grace to profit by the great sacrifice of Calvary in which thou didst co-operate, so that, at the moment of our death, Jesus may point thee out to us, and say: "Behold your Mother;" and may admit us to participate in thy ineffable joys.

Résumé, page 405.

Let us meditate on the third word of Jesus on the cross.

1. Let us consider the circumstances under which he pronounces it!

2. Mary is standing at the foot of the cross.

3. The beloved disciple is there also.

4. Jesus looks upon his holy Mother who is overwhelmed with grief.

5. He makes her our mother; designating St. John, who represents all Christians, he says to Mary: "Woman, behold thy son," then looking upon St. John and designating Mary, he says: "Behold thy mother." Mary, entering into his views, adopts us as her children.

—Let this meditation move us,

1. To thank Jesus for so excellent a gift.

2. To take pride in our title of Christians, which makes us the children of Mary.

3. To renew our love for Mary.

4. To have recourse with the most entire confidence to our fond Mother.

5. To consecrate ourselves to her honor in union with St. John, who takes her with him to his home.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION

ABANDONMENT OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—

Matt. xxvii. 46.

CONSIDERATION

Let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ suffering inconceivable pains on the cross; and let us do so in union with his desolate Mother, who stands at its foot. Let us contemplate his crown of thorns, his pale brow bedewed with the sweat of his last agony, his divine countenance covered with blood and dust, his livid lips, his tearful eyes, his heaving chest, and his gaping wounds; but particularly his pierced hands and feet. Let us think of what he now suffers in his soul, when he reflects that he is an object of contempt to all and when, as in his agony in the Garden of Olives, he mentally reviews the great number of sinners who will trample on the blood which he is shedding for man's redemption.

His enemies still cherish the same hatred for him, although he manifests for them only the most generous and the most heroic love. 'The waters of tribulation have failed to quench the fire of charity' which consumes his divine heart. He is still inflamed with the same desire for their salvation. Hence, to impress them with the enormity of the crime which they are committing, and to lead them to repentance, he causes the earth to quake

¹Cant. viii. 7.

violently and thereby remind them of the moral convulsion of which they are the authors; for he moves even inanimate creatures to testify their horror of the deicide which is about to be consummated.

A thick darkness overspreads the earth and covers it as with a pall; the sun veils his splendor; fear takes possession of all hearts; the blasphemous words of the Pharisees are followed by a terrified silence; all the enemies of the Savior feel the dominion of a superior power which, by the voice of the elements, reproaches them with their crimes. But alas! far from entering into themselves, they persist in their criminal dispositions.

O what a subject of pain for Jesus! He finds no subject of consolation, no alleviation of his sufferings; but on the contrary, all things combining to aggravate his torments. He is absolutely "the Man of Sorrows."¹ According to the expression of Holy Writ, he has to tread alone the winepress of divine justice.² Alone he must expiate our iniquities, the responsibility of which he has assumed before his Father; and therefore it is that he suffers this greatest and most heartrending pain,—abandonment by his heavenly Father. Let us gaze upon his countenance looking heavenward and expressing all the distress of his soul; let us hear him saying: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What grief he manifests by these mysterious words, and what a lesson he teaches us therein! Till then Jesus had uttered no complaint. In allowing this cry to escape him, he would have us reflect that his sufferings are momentarily aggravated until their accumulated weight seems to overwhelm him. He reveals to us that

¹Isai. liii. 3.

²*Ibid.* lxiii. 3.

his chalice is becoming more and more bitter and that the agony of Calvary is even more intolerable than that of Gethsemane.

By these words, he invites us to reflect on the cause of his sufferings:—"My God," he says, "why hast thou forsaken me?" But he had already said by David: "My iniquities are gone over my head; and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me."¹ These iniquities are our sins; and it is we who are the cause of his utter desolation. By offending God, we have deserved to be abandoned by him to our own weakness and misery, and to the fury of the enemies of our souls. Now the Father seeing unfaithful mankind in his Son who is clothed in the form of a sinner, appears to abandon him and to give no ear to his groanings.

Jesus suffers this dereliction, to merit for us the grace not to be abandoned by divine justice to the most rigorous and hopeless of all pains, the pain of loss, so justly due to our sins. O what gratitude do we not owe to our generous Redeemer for suffering this in our stead!

By this cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah announced by the prophets, for these are the first words of the psalm which best depicts the sorrows that he was to endure, and which had traced, a thousand years before, the mournful aspect under which he now presents himself. "My God," he had said by the mouth of the royal prophet² "look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me? . . . O my God, I shall cry by day, and thou wilt not hear. . . But thou dwellest in the holy place. . . I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the out-

¹Ps. xxxvii. 5.

²Ps. xxi. 1-20.

cast of the people. . . My God, depart not from me; for tribulation is very near, for there is none to help me. . . I am poured out like water; and all my bones are scattered. My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd . . . They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. . . They parted my garments amongst them; and upon my vesture they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, remove not thy help to a distance from me; look towards my defence.”

APPLICATION

Yes, Jesus is indeed, as the prophets saw him, abandoned by all, suffering all manner of pain, enduring a most bitter, acute and inconceivable agony of soul and body. Let us adore him in the state of abandonment in which he is left by God the Father. Let us bear in mind that he suffers this on account of our sins, in our place, and to merit for us the grace not to be abandoned by God.

Let us, when in a state of spiritual dryness, suffer in union with Jesus in his state of desolation. There are for us, as for all men, weary hours or, at least, painful moments, when earth seems as stone and the heavens as brass; when our minds, shrouded in darkness, appear unable to conceive even a pious thought; when the soul, oppressed with anguish cries out: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Let us then remember the abandonment of Jesus on the cross, and in union with him let us be patient and resigned. Let us act in the same way when we are forsaken, abandoned or even in-

sulted by men. Let us bear this trial through love for our divine Savior, and in atonement for our faults. Let us examine into the state of our conscience; and if unfortunately we are in disgrace with God, let us heed the cry of our suffering Jesus: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" The same words of reproach he addresses us when we are in tepidity, when we neglect to visit him in his Sacrament, to adore him within ourselves, and to attend to his presence; nay, even when we fail in charity towards our brethren, or our pupils. Let us, then, cease to give him cause to reproach us. Whatsoever our trials may be, let us always be united to him, and devoted to his service.

PRAYER

It is just, O my divine Savior! that I have some portion of thy sufferings, that at least I drink with thee of the chalice which I ought to drink alone. I resign myself, therefore, to whatsoever sufferings thou wilt be pleased to send me; even, shouldst thou so ordain, to be abandoned to spiritual dryness and aridity. Oh! why should I who have sinned so often, and who have so many times deserved to be abandoned by God forever, seek for interior consolations? No, no, Lord! I ask thee not for those joys of soul wherewith thou sometimes rewardest thy saints on earth, but for patience to endure the privation of them. If it be thy will that I be fastened with thee to the cross, that all my life I be deprived of sensible consolation, I cheerfully submit to it, O my Jesus, in order that I may become more like to thee; and that one day, in the abode where there is

neither pain nor sorrow, thou mayest bestow on me that supreme felicity which the possession of God secures.

Résumé, page 406.

Let us contemplate Jesus on the cross:

1. An impenetrable darkness covers the earth.
2. The sun is, as it were, veiled in horror of the deicide which is committing.
3. The very enemies of Jesus are filled with terror.
4. He is abandoned by all except Mary and John.
5. In a sense, he is abandoned by Heaven itself: "My God, my God," he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?"
O what grief this cry reveals.

—Yes, Jesus is now in the state in which the prophets had seen him.

1. Let us adore him in his abandonment.
2. Let us reflect that he suffers this pain to save us from being abandoned on account of our sins.
3. In union with him, let us suffer all spiritual dryness and all abandonment on the part of men.
4. If we are in a state of sin, let us listen to Jesus saying to us: "Why hast thou forsaken me?"
5. Let us hasten to console him by our conversion.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION

JESUS SUFFERING THIRST

I thirst.—John xix. 28.

CONSIDERATION

For more than twelve hours has Jesus been a prey to suffering unrelieved by either nourishment or repose. His agony in the Garden of Olives, the ill treatment which he received in the streets of Jerusalem, in the house of Caiphas, and in the palace of Herod; his scourging, his crowning with thorns, the insults heaped upon him by the governor's soldiers, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, the shedding of his blood on the cross—all have so exhausted his strength, that were he not miraculously sustained, he would already be dead.

And now he feels the most burning thirst. He is consumed by an inward fire, which greatly increases his frightful torments. Now it is that he can repeat what he had said by the mouth of David: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws. . . I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered."¹

Let us fix our eyes on our divine Savior enduring the torments of excessive thirst: let us contemplate his parched lips, his inflamed mouth opened to catch the cooling air. Let us listen to his labored breathing, and

¹Ps. xxi. 16; ci. 5.

read in his eyes the violence of the fever that consumes him. What sick person is there, even if he be among the poorest of the poor, who has not, in his last moments, at least a little water to quench his thirst? But what all men have, our divine Savior wants, and wants at the very moment when he needs it most.

The Lamb immolated for us is now wholly consumed on the altar of holocaust, and expiates, by a particular torment, the sins that men have committed by the sense of taste. He who is the Source of living waters, the mystic Fountain of eternal life, feels a devouring thirst; the God who created the immensity of the ocean is reduced to such extreme misery as to crave a drop of water. O how great is the pain of our beloved Savior! a pain which he has endured for several hours, without a murmur, without even uttering a word of complaint. Yet, now when about to die, he is going to reveal it, in order to inspire us with horror for the sins of sensuality which he is expiating, and to fulfill the prophecy: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

He says, "I thirst;" and immediately, as if in fulfillment of the prophecy, one of the soldiers, dipping a sponge in vinegar, puts it on the end of a reed, and offers it to our adorable Savior, who presses it with his lips.

"What!" exclaims St. Augustine, "the God of goodness who for us gives the water its coolness and the honey its sweetness, receives from the hands of men only vinegar for drink!" With that great saint, let us be filled with astonishment and indignation at the cruelty displayed by the enemies of our divine Redeemer; and let us raise our hearts and minds to other considerations on the

spirit of this mystery of the thirst endured by Jesus on the cross.

This thirst is so real, that it is one of his greatest torments; but it is also symbolical, and it is especially under this second aspect that we should meditate upon it.

By the words "I thirst," Jesus manifests the intensity of his desire for the glory of his Father, the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, our progress in perfection, the establishment and the supremacy of his Church. By them he reminds us of the charity which consumes his heart; he craves a return of love for love and sacrifice for sacrifice, that we may all attain the salvation which he is meriting for us by his sufferings and death.

O if we could conceive the intensity of the thirst of Jesus, how quickly we would respond to his call! how eagerly we would hasten to offer him the pure water that he asks! how faithfully we would correspond with his graces, and apply ourselves to become daily more perfect, to maintain and increase in our hearts the fire of his holy love! how zealously we would labor for the salvation of souls! For Jesus on the cross was devoured by thirst for souls, a thirst which he still feels.

Let us visit him in his holy tabernacle, and ask ourselves what are the desires of his heart, and what he asks of us. We shall hear him say from the altar as from the cross, "I thirst;" I long to see men glorify my Father, depart from evil ways, escape from the tyranny of the devil, abandon error, attach themselves to truth, labor with ardor at the work of their salvation, apply to themselves the fruits of my sacrifice, and merit the eternal glory which I have acquired for them.

APPLICATION

Jesus says to us, "I thirst;" but what effect will these words have on our souls? Will they leave us insensible and indifferent? or will they excite in our hearts the compassion which they ought to inspire? Above all, will they lead us to accomplish our divine Master's will which they make known to us?

Jesus says to us, "I thirst." What are we going to offer him? Shall it be the pure water of sanctity, the generous wine of charity? or shall it be the vinegar and gall of tepidity, or infidelity? In the latter case, how unhappy we should be; how cruel to him and to ourselves; how unworthy of his benefits! Imitators of the Jews, we should deserve like them to be rejected by God.

Let it not be so. Animated by love and gratitude, let us satisfy the desires of the heart of Jesus. Let us devote ourselves joyfully and unreservedly to the greater glory of God the Father, and promote it with the most active and disinterested zeal. Let us labor with all our strength to make that good Master to whom we have consecrated ourselves, known, loved, and served. Let us pray fervently for the conversion of sinners, the preservation of the innocence of children, the increase of piety in our Brothers, and the maintenance of regularity in our communities.

Above all, let us labor with courage and constancy at our own perfection, remembering that this is what our divine Savior principally demands of us in calling us to his service. Let us behold in him our Master and obey him; our Model, and imitate him. To that end let us practise interior and exterior mortification; let us

overcome our fallen nature, crucify our passions, and, when we suffer any privation, remember that on the cross Jesus was deprived of everything, and that in his thirst he had only vinegar to drink.

PRAYER

O Jesus, divine Lamb, whom I contemplate and adore on the altar of holocaust! O holy Victim, who art consumed with zeal for thy Father's glory and for our salvation! I have heard thee cry, "I thirst;" I have learned that by these mysterious words thou dost manifest the greatness of the torment which thou endurest, and the intensity of thy desire that all men apply to themselves the merits of thy sacrifice, and so work out their salvation!

Grant me, O Lord, grace to acquire the spirit of the mystery on which thou invitest me to meditate, to compassionate with all my heart the excessive suffering which thou dost feel, and to deplore the cruelty of the Jews who refuse thee even a little water. Give me with all thy saints a deep conviction that thou dost thirst after my perfection. Give me especially a firm purpose to relieve thy thirst by advancing courageously and constantly towards the happiness to which thou callest me, and which I hope to attain by the grace which thou didst merit for me on the cross.

Résumé, page 406.

From the time of his departure from the supper-room, Jesus had not taken the least nourishment, although he had suffered untold pain and sorrow.

1. His mouth is parched, his stomach inflamed.

2. He feels the most burning thirst.
3. He manifests it by crying out: "I thirst."
4. But, as David had foretold, no relief is given him.
5. His executioners offer him only vinegar.

Let us compassionate our divine Savior enduring this torment; but let us reflect that this natural thirst which consumes him is little compared with the thirst which his divine heart feels.

—Yes, Jesus thirsts:

1. For the glory of his father.
2. For the conversion of sinners.
3. For the perseverance of the just.
4. For our salvation, for our perfection.
5. For the establishment of his kingdom throughout the whole world.

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION

JESUS SAYS: "ALL IS CONSUMMATED"

When Jesus had taken the vinegar, he said, "All is consummated."—John xix. 30.

CONSIDERATION

O Christian souls, let us go to Calvary, to the foot of the cross whereon Jesus is soon to expire. Let us fix our eyes on the adorable Victim, at the moment when he is about to complete the bloody sacrifice which reconciles us with his Father. Let us hearken to him uttering in a strong voice those words so rich in salutary teachings: "All is consummated." Let us meditate on them attentively, and study their various significations.

"All is consummated!"—I have accomplished all that my Father had decreed for me, all that, as God, I had determined to accomplish. I have done the will of him who sent me; I have become obedient even unto death, the death of the cross. I have fulfilled in every detail the mission given me from above.

"All is consummated!"—All my blood has flowed through the wounds wherewith my body is covered; my strength is exhausted; I am suffering my last pains; my life is ending; the moment is at hand when I shall allow death to come upon me.

"All is consummated!"—I know what the prophets

have written of me, and what the Jewish worship prefigured, and I see that every thing relating to me is realized. I have accomplished all that was revealed of the Messiah: I have been a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity;¹ my apparel has been red with my blood,² I have borne the iniquity of all;³ my enemies, like furious bulls, have besieged me;⁴ I have paid that which I took not away;⁵ waters have flowed over my head;⁶ I, the Root of Jesse, have stood for an ensign of the people;⁷ I have been lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert;⁸ my garments have been divided by lot.⁹ They have given me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.¹⁰

“All is consummated!”—The figurative religion has ceased; ancient sacrifices have given place to the only true sacrifice foretold by the prophet: “In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean obligation.”¹¹

“All is consummated!”—The bloody sacrifice of the New Law is ended, the world is redeemed; I have done all that divine justice required; I have wrought an abundant, nay, a superabundant redemption; I have amply satisfied for all the sins of men; I have paid the price of their ransom; they are now reconciled with God; the sentence of their condemnation is annulled; the gates of Paradise are about to be opened to them.

“All is consummated!”—I triumph over death and hell; the hour of the powers of darkness is past; I reign henceforth by this wood to which my enemies have

¹Isa. liii. 3. ²*Ibid.* lxiii. 2. ³*Ibid.* liii. 6. ⁴Ps. xxi. 13.

⁵*Ibid.* lxviii. 5. ⁶Lament. iii. 54. ⁷Isai. xi. 10. ⁸John iii. 14.

⁹Ps. xxi. 19. ¹⁰*Ibid.* lxviii. 22. ¹¹Mal. i. 11.

fastened me. This is the sceptre of my power; before it all heads shall bow.

“All is consummated!”—The law of grace has replaced that law of fear; the expectation of nations is fulfilled; I have done for men all that my heart inspired; I have acquired infinite treasures of merits for them; I have supplied them with everything requisite for their sanctification and salvation; I have finished the work for which I came on this earth. Light has shone in darkness; I have revealed every truth necessary for humanity; I have founded for all time my holy Church, the pillar of truth; I have established my religion which will spread over the whole earth and produce the most heroic virtues. From my feet and hands spring four rivers of blood which, like the four rivers of the terrestrial paradise, are going to fertilize the world and to call forth apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, penitents, and other saints, beyond the power of man to number.

“All is consummated!”—Without yielding to either impatience or discouragement, I have gone through a most painful career, being repeatedly thwarted by the contradictions of men. I have been faithful even unto death, and, having reached the end of my course, I teach all Christians that it is not sufficient to enter on the way of salvation, but that to merit the crown, they must persevere even to the end.

APPLICATION

As we reflect on the different meanings of these words, “All is consummated,” let us impress deeply on our minds what Jesus suffered. Let us study the greatness

and extent of his sorrows from the moment of his Incarnation to that of his death, and let us try to conceive the bitterness of the cup which he drained to the dregs.

Let us reflect that he suffered for us, and let us ask ourselves what sentiments of gratitude we should entertain and by what works we should make them manifest.

Kneeling at the foot of the cross whereon our Redeemer is shedding his blood, let us renounce sin and renounce it for ever. Let us weep for the faults which we have committed; let us ask pardon through the superabundant merits of our divine Savior, and let us do condign penance for them.

Jesus has accomplished his part in the work of our salvation; but ours is not yet done. As members of his mystical body, we must share his sufferings, and courageously practise mortification, that we may say with the Apostle: "I fill up, in my flesh, those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ."¹ Let us, then, prepare ourselves, by a holy and penitential life, for the moment when he shall say to us: "All is consummated." Happy shall we be if we are then found to be in the grace of God!

"All is consummated," says the just man when dying: "My troubles are over, my trials are at an end, and I am about to receive the reward for which I have labored. I had to make great efforts, it is true; to be humble, obedient, mortified and faithful to all my duties; but, now, nothing remains of my troubles but a consoling remembrance. God is preparing for me a throne of glory, and will give me for my portion the true freedom of his children. I am called to the heavenly Jeru-

¹Col. i. 24.

sa^lem, I am going to enjoy the vision of my God, to contemplate forever the humanity of my divine Redeemer, to dwell with Mary, to sing with the angels and saints an eternal hymn of gratitude. Thank God! all is consummated. 'I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course: I have kept the faith; for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice.'"¹

"All is consummated," shall the dying sinner say: "My life is at an end: pleasures, honors, riches, luxuries, banquets, worldly joys—all is over for me! I leave all that I have loved, and I take with me only the sins of which I am guilty, and for which I shall be condemned. . . 'All is consummated.' Hell is henceforth my only portion. I have now to endure that fiery torment which is never to end."

Soon shall we, too, say: "All is consummated!" Shall these words then signify that we have done all that God had ordained for us, all that he had demanded of us by our holy Rules, all that he had prescribed by our superiors? or, on the contrary, shall they signify that we have abused his graces and neglected the means of salvation which he has offered us? Let us reflect that the answer will be determined by the life which we are now leading and on that which we may lead in future.

PRAYER

O Lord, continue and complete the work of my salvation, which is also thy work; it has cost thee so much that thou canst not leave it imperfect. I know that although thy passion was consummated by thee,

¹2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

it will not open Heaven to me at the hour of my death unless I have been made like unto thee by practising mortification and so sharing in thy sufferings. I beseech thee, by the merits of thy passion and death, grant that, an imitation of thy apostle, I may keep the faith in all its purity, sustain it by good works, and finish my course in the way of virtue.

Résumé, page 407.

Jesus, when about to die, cries out: "All is consummated!"

That is to say:

1. I have accomplished the will of my heavenly Father, and satisfied his justice.

2. The prophecies are fulfilled.

3. The figurative religion is at an end.

4. The world is redeemed; the Evil One is vanquished.

5. The Church is founded to last forever.

—Meditating on the different meanings of these words, "All is consummated."

1. Let us reflect on what Jesus suffered for our salvation.

2. Let us be grateful to him, and testify it by our works.

3. Let us renounce sin forever.

4. Let us enter upon the way of justice and persevere therein.

5. Let us remember that soon we too shall say: "All is consummated."

Shall we say it, like the just, with sentiments of joy, or like the sinner, with tears and in accents of despair?

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION

JESUS COMMENDS HIS SOUL TO HIS FATHER

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.—⁴Luke xxiii. 46.

CONSIDERATION

Behold the moment when the most gracious, the most holy, and the most admirable life ever lived on this earth, is about to end in a most ignominious death. Our divine Redeemer is going to finish on the cross the long and painful combat in which he has been engaged for our salvation. He has nothing more to do but return after his innumerable toils and sufferings to rest in the bosom of his heavenly Father.

Yet, before dying, or rather in dying, he still speaks to men and gives them the most sublime instructions. Let us gather at the foot of his cross and listen in sentiments of the most profound reverence to his last words, which he speaks in a loud voice, as if to impress them deeply on our minds, to move us to ponder them in our hearts, and not merely to repeat them with our lips.

The Gospel relates that Jesus, after saying, "All is consummated!" cries out: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He addresses his Father. He does not say as before, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but exclaims with entire confidence, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." These

words are not only the last clause of his testament; they are also a perfect act of adoration paid by his holy humanity to God the Father. At the last supper, Jesus gave to men his body and blood under the species of bread and wine; on Calvary, he bequeathed to them his Blessed Mother, at the very time when he was sacrificing his life for them. He has nothing left now but his soul, and this he offers to him from whom he received it—to God who is the beginning of all things, and to whom, therefore, all must return.

O how lovingly our heavenly Father receives the soul which Jesus resigns into his hands—that soul which is hypostatically united to the divinity, and which is radiant with all the splendor of the Word, that soul which infinitely loved and glorified him, that soul which had no thought, no desire, no will but for his glory!

By the soul which Jesus gives up to his Father, we are to understand not only the perfect spirit which, with his sacred body, constitutes his holy humanity, but likewise all the faithful who are united to him; for, says St. Paul, “he who adheres to the Lord, is one spirit with him.”¹ Hence, as St. Athanasius affirms, when the Son of God commends his soul into the hands of his Father, he commends to him at the same time all those who are members of his mystical body, and who are animated by his spirit.

O how great should be our gratitude to Jesus, our divine Head! He has commended our souls to his Father, he has resigned them into his hands! God,

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

who hears him always,¹ will, therefore, receive them; he will preserve them, fill them with joy and happiness and one day re-unite them to our bodies, which will thereby become living and glorious.

Let us then re-animate our hope. Jesus is our Head and our Model. What he does in that capacity he enjoins on us, and he has merited for us the grace to do it. We, too, can therefore say with sweet confidence at the moment of death: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and sincerely trust that God will receive it, as he received that of his adorable Son, with which it is united by the bond of charity.

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. He destroyed sin which sets our souls at enmity with God. There is, therefore, nothing now to prevent them from being admitted by God, immediately after death, into the possession of the infinite happiness which they are destined to enjoy. Each one of us may now desire, with St. Paul, to be loosed from the bonds of this body,² in order to dwell with our Lord in the bosom of his heavenly Father.

Jesus Christ is our Master. By his word on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he teaches us that death is not destruction, but only a separation of soul from body; that the soul, coming from God, is to return to God; that the acceptance of death is truly an act of adoration whereby we acknowledge God as the Sovereign Lord of all things, as our beginning and our end, as the Creator from whom we have received our souls and to whom we ought to yield them up.

¹John xi. 42.

²Phil. i. 23.

By these words, he also teaches us that of itself death is not to be dreaded; that it is, in reality, but the happy moment when the faithful Christian gives back his soul to him from whom he received it; when he returns to his Father and with entire confidence casts himself into his arms; when he says with Jesus who then assists him with special grace, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Remember that it is the breath of thy mouth, the price of thy Son's blood, the fruit of his labors. Vouchsafe, I beseech thee, to welcome it to the home of thy clemency."

Happy the Christian who, in his last moments, is in these dispositions! He does sweet violence to God by this absolute confidence and this union with his dying Savior whose merits he applies to himself. He begins with the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," the song of gratitude which he will continue in heaven.

APPLICATION

Let us often think of that last hour when we must give up our souls to our Maker. In truth, the sole occupation of a Christian should be to dispose himself to render an account of his life to God on the day when he shall end it. That day will soon come for each of us: let us think of this and be ready.

When we shall press the crucifix to our dying lips, let us repeat those words of Jesus on the cross, which will then naturally suggest themselves and which form part of the prayer for the agonizing: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." But, that we may then pronounce them with confidence, we must, during

the course of our life, frequently and piously repeat them, at the same time abandoning ourselves interiorly to God. Each one of us must say to him, from the bottom of his heart: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, with all its thoughts, its desires, and its fears. Dispose of me as thou wilt: I abandon myself to thy Providence. In whatever state thou mayest place me, whatever trials thou mayest send me, with whatever tribulations thou mayest afflict me, I will still bless thy holy name."

We must imitate Jesus Christ, doing exactly and lovingly all that his Father demands of us, that by his grace we too may be able to say with him: "All is consummated, all is accomplished that was commanded us."

We must be more and more closely united with our divine Mediator, and be solidly grounded in his charity. We must, moreover, persevere therein, live his life, act as he would act in our place, animate ourselves with the same motives, and propose to ourselves the same ends. We must be one with him, so that the soul of each of us may belong truly to his mystical soul. Being in one sense his, he may then say of it, at the hour of death: "Father, into thy hands I commend this soul which is mine and which I have saved."

Let us earnestly ask for this union with him. His Father, then recognizing him in us, will receive our souls as he received his, and admit them among the blessed and the angelic host to the enjoyment of eternal bliss.

PRAYER

O Jesus, adorable Victim, remember that on the cross thou didst recommend my soul to God with those

of all who believe in thee, and who are thy members. I beseech thee by thy sacred wounds, by thy precious blood, and by thy ignominious death, grant that thy prayer may have its full efficacy in my regard. Save my soul; consider it as thine; and, at my death, come, O generous Redeemer, to present it to thy Father, and ask him to receive it with infinite clemency. Amen.

Résumé, page 407.

Jesus pronounces his last words: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Let us consider that, by these words,

1. He commends his soul to his Father.
2. He commends to him also the souls of all men.
3. He proclaims the immortality of the human soul.
4. He strengthens us against the fear of death.
5. He leads us to the most filial confidence in God.

—Let us, as the fruit of this meditation, resolve:

1. To think often of death.
2. To pray for the grace of a happy death.
3. To recite, for that end, the prayer of Jesus on the cross.

4. To be more closely united with our dear Savior.

5. To make but one with him in order that our soul being, as it were, one with his, each of us also may be able to say at the moment of death, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Bowing his head, he gave up the ghost.—John xix. 30.

CONSIDERATION

Let us go in spirit to Calvary, and draw near the cross, the altar of the great sacrifice. Let us contemplate the divine Lamb expiring thereon to take away the sins of the world. His last moment is nigh; the bloody sacrifice effecting our reconciliation with God is almost completed; he who is at once Priest and Victim gives himself up to death. “Jesus,” says the evangelist, “bowing his head, gave up the ghost.” O what a subject for meditation! what lessons he teaches us! what sentiments such a spectacle ought to excite in our hearts!

Jesus bows his head to show that he adores the decrees of heaven, that he is resigned to die, that he accepts death in order to accomplish the will of his Father. “He humbled himself,” says St. Paul, “becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”¹ He bows his head in submission to death; for death, as St. Athanasius says, would not have dared approach the Lord of life, if he had not himself summoned it. Finally, he bows his head to give us the kiss of peace and reconciliation.

¹Phil. ii. 8.

Jesus bows his head, and dies. . . . Jesus is dead! What a subject for astonishment, grief and tears! Jesus, the Author of life, the Father of the world to come, the Son of the living God, is dead! . . . Jesus, our Master, the Spouse of our souls, the only object of our love, is dead! and dead on the cross!

O Christian souls, contemplate the sacred body of your divine Savior fastened to the wood of the cross; behold his head bowed down towards the earth, his blood-stained brow, his darkened eyes, his closed mouth. Contemplate that face once so beautiful, reflecting, as it did, a divine soul, but now pale and disfigured. "Consider," says St. Bonaventure, "that crown of thorns and those murderous nails, those wounds in his hands and feet, his body covered with bruises, and his mangled flesh; and learn from these tokens how much Jesus has loved you."

Yes, let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus dead on the cross. Let us contemplate him in union with Mary, the most desolate of all mothers, who at this moment suffers the greatest of all her sorrows. Let us, like Magdalen, contemplate him with sentiments of ardent love and also of lively repentance for our faults, the true cause of his death. Let us contemplate him, like the soldiers who crucified him, and who, as soon as he expired, struck their breasts and confessed that he was truly the Son of God.

Jesus is God! Why, then, should his life be thus sacrificed? Wherefore did he die, who is the Author of life, and is Innocence itself? It is because, in his charity and generosity, he would pay to God his Father infinite homage in reparation for the outrages that we

have offered to his divine Majesty; because he would deliver us from the death that we had merited, open to us heaven closed by the first sin of mankind, confirm the testament that he had made in our favor, and put us in possession of all the treasures of grace.

Jesus is dead, because he has had pity on us sinners; because, notwithstanding our sins, he has loved us, and so loved us as to prefer us to himself. His death, therefore, is the work both of our iniquity and of his love. How great should be the gratitude and how sincere the contrition which it should excite in our hearts!

O Jesus, since thy death is my work, I will always deplore it; but since it is also the work of thy charity for me, I will love thee in return, with all the affection of which I am capable. I will open my heart to hope, for thy sacrifice is the beginning of my happiness, my reconciliation with God, my restoration to the state from which I had fallen by sin.

Jesus is dead; but Jesus represented all mankind. The warrant that condemned us all to die has been executed on him; but henceforth that warrant is annulled in our regard. Consequently, if we are united to Jesus Christ, the death which we ought all to undergo is no longer a punishment, but rather a reward; since, by it, we enter into the enjoyment of the glory acquired for us by our divine Redeemer.

Jesus is dead! therefore his work is accomplished; earth is reconciled with heaven. God, whose justice is satisfied, again recognizes men as his beloved children; the way of salvation is open to all peoples. The Church is founded, the sacraments are instituted. The seed of truth is sown on earth; it is fertilized by the

divine blood that flowed from the cross, it will take root and propagate itself over the whole earth. The Jewish worship is abolished, the prophetic religion has lost its significance; the Ancient Covenant is replaced by the New; the veil of the temple which concealed the tabernacle and the holy of holies, is suddenly rent from top to bottom, for why should that veil be drawn when the true Holy of holies, is exposed on the cross on Calvary, before the eyes of the whole world?

APPLICATION

Let us adore the dead body of Jesus fastened to the wood of the cross, and let us admire the ineffable prodigy of grace which has just been wrought. O mystery which to the Jews is a stumbling-block, and to the gentiles foolishness!¹ The Just One has sacrificed himself for sinners, the Master for his slaves! a God has died for man! Yes, Jesus is dead for us; but he is deprived of life by us sinners, the true authors of his immolation. None of us can say: "I am innocent of the blood of this Just Man."² Let us, then, bewail our transgressions, and, at the foot of the cross, resolve to repent of them sincerely and never more commit them.

At the thought of our Savior's death, let us revive in our hearts the hope of pardon. Whatever may be our faults, let us trust that our heavenly Father will show us mercy in virtue of the infinite merits of the death of his adorable Son.

Let us often picture to our minds Jesus dead on the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23.

² Matt. xxvii. 24.

cross, because we shall thereby produce good fruit in our souls. Let us be particularly attentive to this during the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when as Priest and Victim, he continues to offer to God, for our salvation, the merits of his death on Calvary.

Let us pause before the mysterious wood of the cross, for to it is fastened the body of him who "made himself a curse for us," and let it measure the depth of the love and gratitude we owe him. How can we contemplate him on the cross without being penetrated with sentiments of the liveliest affection, without being led to devote ourselves unreservedly to him and to cherish no other desire than that of sacrificing ourselves for his glory!

Let us ask, through the merits of his death, a spirit of true penance and the grace to grow more and more perfect in his charity until he shall call us to another life to enjoy the fruits of his redemption.

PRAYER

O Jesus, my beloved Savior, whom I contemplate dead on the bloody altar of Calvary, behold the sentiments that engage my soul. When I consider thee, my heart is broken with grief, my soul gives vent to its feelings in sighs and groans; tears flow down my cheeks and, like those of Magdalen, mingle with thy blood at the foot of the cross.

Yes, Lord, I understand how unfortunate I have been in offending thee. I will ever bewail my unfaithfulness as the true cause of thy immolation. But, O

my Jesus, I will also hope in thee, for I know that thou didst undergo death to restore me to life.

O divine Savior, grant that I may participate in the fruits of thy immolation. Remember that it was for me thou didst expire on the cross, and cast me not away. Grant that my soul, which has cost thee so much, may be delivered from the evil from which thou didst come to free it; and that one day, near thy glorious throne in heaven, I may be admitted to pay thee homage for my perseverance, and to sing with the saints the undying song of gratitude and love.

Résumé, page 408.

The last moment has come: Jesus bows his head and expires.

Let us contemplate him as Mary and John then contemplated him, and yield to all the sentiments which the subject inspires.

Let us reflect that Jesus died:

1. To satisfy divine justice.
2. To reconcile us with heaven.
3. To give us a new life.
4. To show his love for us.
5. To found the Church and thereby save the human race.

—In meditating on these thoughts,

1. Let us adore Jesus dead on the cross.
2. Let us weep over him, let us weep over our sins.
3. Let us revive in our hearts the hope of pardon.
4. Let us love Jesus with all our hearts, and seek only his love. Let us bless his infinite generosity.
5. Let us ask, through the merits of his death, the grace of a happy death.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

THE BODY OF JESUS PIERCED BY THE SPEAR

They shall look on him whom they pierced.—John xix. 37.

CONSIDERATION

Referring to the manner of his death, Jesus had said: “When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself;”¹ and at the very moment when he expires on the cross, he fulfils this prediction. The veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, to signify that all the ancient sacrifices are abolished, and that there is henceforth but one sacrifice, that of the cross. The earth trembles, the rocks are split asunder, sepulchres open; even inanimate nature manifests its horror of the crime committed.

The centurion standing at the foot of the cross, and the soldiers who keep guard over Jesus, affrighted by what they see, give glory to God, saying, “Indeed, this was a just man.”² The vast multitude of spectators departs, each one striking his breast,³ and deploring the deicide of which his nation has been guilty. From this very moment, the Savior’s death is productive of sanctification. Jesus draws souls to himself by the way of penance. He bestows from the cross numberless graces on men who, according to the prophecy of

¹John xii. 32.

²Luke xxiii. 47; Matt. xxvii. 54.

³Luke xxiii. 48.

Isaiah, "shall draw waters with joy from the Savior's fountains," fountains that are opened to them by each wound of the divine Victim. But soon another shall be opened in his heart, the source and plenitude of all graces. Love had inspired every action of Jesus; love had led him to a most cruel and ignominious death; but he is about to manifest in a most admirable manner that love is stronger than death.

As the sabbath of the Pasch is at hand, the Jews ask Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the thieves broken, so that their bodies may not remain exposed on a day so solemn.

Accordingly, soldiers come and break the legs of both the thieves, in order to hasten their death. But when they approach Jesus, seeing that he is already dead, they refrain from breaking his legs, and thus accomplish what was decreed concerning the Paschal Lamb, the figure of the divine Victim: "Neither shall you break a bone thereof."²

But it was likewise written: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;"³ and these words are about to be fulfilled. A soldier approaches the cross, and piercing with his lance the side of Jesus, makes a deep wound, whence issue blood and water.⁴

With the saints, let us contemplate the wound in the side of Jesus. Let us even penetrate to the sacred heart which it discloses, and which was pierced by the lance. We shall then realize that the heart of our Savior is the focus of purest love, the furnace of divine charity. Love was the principle of its every

¹Isai. xii. 3.

²Exod. xii. 46.

³Zach. xii. 10.

⁴John xix. 34.

motion, and, though stilled in death, it is nevertheless about to give us a precious pledge of love; it is about to open in order to communicate to us its treasures of grace, and to shed on the earth the last drops of precious blood and of purifying and sanctifying water, which it contains.

This divine heart is the model not only of charity, but likewise of all other virtues. Jesus had said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart,"¹ thus inviting all men to study the perfections of his sacred heart. Let us, then, try to enter into his views while we are contemplating him dead on the cross.

Let us ask ourselves to what a degree of perfection the divine Lamb who is slain on the altar of the great sacrifice, practised the virtue of meekness. Let us reflect on the extent to which the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, carried the virtue of humility; he was crucified between two thieves, loaded with imprecations, degraded, insulted, mocked, overwhelmed with contempt, and at last gave up his life on an infamous gibbet!

The heart of Jesus is the seat of goodness, tenderness, and compassion. He lowered himself to our condition that he might soothe and console us; he shared all our pains and troubles. At sight of the crimes and the indifference of men, his soul was oppressed with sorrow. He wept over Jerusalem, over impenitent sinners, over all miseries and misfortunes.

The heart of Jesus is our asylum, our refuge, and our defence. There we are beyond the reach of the thunders of an avenging God, and the strokes of his justice

¹Matt. xi. 29.

irritated by our sins. There the enemies of our salvation may not enter, for it is an impregnable fortress, against the base of which all their efforts are broken. In it is the "cleft of the rock" where the dove is sheltered from the pursuit of the vulture.¹ Happy are they who, like St. Elzear, can say: "I dwell in the wound in the side of Jesus, in his very heart! There I take up my abode." There my soul is in safety; there it finds the sweetest repose and tastes the most delicious peace.

O divine heart, hypostatically united to the Word, seat of infinite love! O heart worthy of the homage of heaven and earth, and before which all nations shall bow down! O heart through which our homage becomes acceptable to God! O mediating heart through which all our acts of love and piety reach the heavenly Father! O generous heart, neither repelled nor discouraged, by contradiction and ingratitude, heart answering insults only with benefits, heart that has so loved men as to sacrifice itself even for its enemies! Can we consider thee and not be transported with the desire of responding fully to thy love for us, devoting ourselves to thy worship, blessing and glorifying thee, and laboring unceasingly to increase the number of thy faithful worshippers?

APPLICATION

As we meditate on this subject, let us think of the sorrow felt by the most holy heart of Mary when she saw the sacred heart of Jesus pierced with a lance. Her heart was one with the heart of her divine Son,

¹Cant. ii. 14.

and thus it was that she too was pierced with the iron of the lance. Then the prophecy of the aged Simeon was realized: "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce."¹

Let us behold our divine Mother receiving the precious blood flowing from the heart of Jesus, while she adores the justice of his heavenly Father which is now satisfied, and blesses the infinite goodness of our Savior in effecting a superabundant redemption and manifesting it by the copious shedding of his blood after the words: "All is consummated."²

Let us adore the fifth wound of Jesus, and meditate on its significancy for all true disciples of our dear Savior. Let us regard it as the source of grace, the refuge of sinners, the voice that most eloquently proclaims to us the infinite goodness of Jesus and his love for us.

Let us offer to his divine Heart a fitting homage of adoration, love, and gratitude. In union with a great number of pious souls, let us venerate it in a very particular manner on the first Friday of every month; let us receive it in holy Communion, lovingly contemplate the representation of it, meditate on its tenderness, invoke it with fervor, and apply ourselves to the work of forming our hearts to its likeness.

PRAYER

"I thank thee, O Jesus, for the wound which thou didst receive on the cross after thy death. It was thy love that, guiding the lance in the soldier's hand, opened with it thy side and thy sacred heart, the un-

¹Luke ii. 35.

²John xix. 30.

failing source of sweetness and tenderness. Blessed be that saving and most holy wound; blessed be the adorable blood and saving water that flowed therefrom to wash away our sins.

“O good Jesus, wash me, a sinner, in that sanctifying water; inebriate me with thy precious blood; and when my soul shall depart from this world, give me, as viaticum, one drop of that divine drink. By thy wounded heart, I beseech thee, O most loving Jesus, pierce my heart with an arrow of thy love, that no longer having any earthly affection, it may be wholly subject to the all-powerful influence of thy heavenly charity.”¹

Résumé, page 408.

Jesus is dead; but some drops of blood yet remain in his heart.

1. He wishes to shed them for us.

2. A soldier approaches the cross.

3. He pierces with a lance the side of the divine Victim.

4. The iron penetrates even to the Sacred Heart.

5. From the wound stream forth water and blood.

—In union with all the saints, let us meditate on this mystery.

1. Let us think of the sufferings of Mary at this moment, and let us compassionate her sorrow.

2. Let us behold her gathering the adorable blood which issued from the heart of Jesus.

3. In union with her, let us adore the fifth wound of the Savior.

4. Let us consider that it is for us a source of new graces, a refuge from the terror of divine justice.

5. Let us regard it as a voice proclaiming the infinite goodness and love of Jesus.

¹Prayer of St. Gertrude.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION

THE FIVE WOUNDS

They have pierced my hands and my feet.—Ps. xxi. 17.

CONSIDERATION

Let us go to Calvary and there contemplate the inanimate body of our divine Redeemer fastened to the cross. Let us look upon the innumerable wounds which cover it from head to foot; let us lovingly study that august head bowed down towards the earth, that adorable face soiled, bruised, and disfigured; those glassy eyes, those lips cold in death. Let us behold that divine body, bloody, mangled and almost dismembered; let us meditate upon the state to which our beloved Redeemer has reduced himself, the state in which the prophets saw him,¹ with no soundness in his flesh, and his bones so exposed to view that they may be numbered!

At this sight, how can we restrain our pent-up feelings, and withhold our tears? Let us, then, shed tears of compassion, of sorrow, and of love. Let us weep at the foot of the cross and in the presence of our God, who has been sacrificed for us; let us fix our gaze upon his sacred body nailed to the cross and covered with wounds. Let us consider more particularly the wounds in his hands and feet and sacred side, since it is of

¹Isai. i. 6; Ps. xxi. 18.

these that Jesus will vouchsafe to preserve the marks after his glorious resurrection, and since the Church presents them for our special veneration.

Let us ask our divine Savior: "Whence come these wounds that I see in thy hands, in thy feet, and in thy side?" and he will answer by the prophet Zachary: "With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me."¹ Let us learn from this, first of all, that these wounds are our work, that they are the result of the sins by which we have offended him. Alas! we have committed a great number by our hands and feet; and hence it is that the hands and feet of our divine Savior were pierced with nails. In like manner, our heart has been the seat of many inordinate affections; and on that account the heart of Jesus was pierced with a lance, and shed its last drops of expiating blood and purifying water.

Let the sight of the sacred wounds of Jesus excite in us, therefore, the liveliest contrition, and inspire us with the greatest horror of sin; let it also remind us of all that our adorable Redeemer suffered to save us. For, are not the five wounds of Jesus eloquent voices reminding us of his sufferings, of the tortures of his crucifixion, and all the torments that he endured during the long hours that he remained on the cross? While contemplating those sacred wounds, how can we fail in love and gratitude towards him whose generosity, devotedness, and infinite love they proclaim so loudly?

The five wounds are for us a motive of unbounded confidence in the mercy of God and the assistance of his grace; they are so many mouths pleading in our

¹Zach. xiii. 6.

behalf before God. By them, Jesus tells his Father that he has expiated our crimes, that he has, by the shedding of his blood, paid all that guilty man owed divine justice; that he has, therefore, the right to demand pardon for our iniquities. O what a source of consolation for us who are so justly affrighted at the thought of the power and the holiness of the God whom we have offended! Yes, we may now ask and obtain our pardon, for the wounds of Jesus will ask and obtain it for us.

They are a secure asylum to which we may flee. There the shafts of heavenly vengeance cannot penetrate, nor can the evil spirit who would fain destroy us; for they are the glorious monuments of his defeat and of the victory of Jesus over hell.

The Savior's wounds, through which flowed the saving blood, are also the channels through which the graces of salvation are poured forth upon men now and shall continue to be poured forth till the end of time. Christians who contemplate them with faith, feel that from them comes a secret strength which disposes them to virtue, to the generous practice of mortification, to the renunciation of pleasure, and to the verification in themselves of those words of St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world."¹

These wounds are ornaments of the now glorified body of Jesus, whose holy humanity is radiant in heaven with divine splendor. They are a subject of blissful contemplation to the elect; they add to the happiness which the blessed shall enjoy forever. O how

¹Gal. vi. 14.

ardently we should desire to be admitted, like them, to contemplate them! With what courage should we not dispose ourselves to practise the virtues that will merit for us that happiness!

Moreover, all men shall one day see those adorable wounds, for Jesus will show them to the whole universe at that final moment when the words of Zachary shall be fully accomplished: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced;"¹ and when those of St. John in the Apocalypse shall in like manner be fulfilled; "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him."²

APPLICATION

What shall be our sentiments when we contemplate those sacred wounds on the great day when our divine Savior will show them to the whole universe? Shall they fill us with joy, or plunge us into despair? If we would then contemplate them with joy, let us often, in this life, consider them as motives of sincere sorrow for our sins; and, if possible, let us keep them ever present to our minds. Let us ask this grace through the intercession of Mary, and say to her with the Church:

"O may the wounds of thy dear Son,
Our contrite hearts possess alone."³

Let us also remember that, as Christians, we ought to reproduce in ourselves the life and sufferings of

¹Zach. xii. 10.

²Apoc. i. 7.

³Hymn *Stabat Mater*.

Jesus, our Head and our Model. Let us ask ourselves then, what means we take to keep those sacred wounds before our minds. How happy we should be if it were by a penitential and mortified life!

Let us often have the crucifix before our eyes, and press it to our heart and our lips. Let us kiss with lively faith and deep respect the marks of the five wounds; and in sentiments of love and confidence, let us ask, through each of them, some special grace.

PRAYER

O Jesus, my generous Redeemer, who callest me at this moment to contemplate thy five wounds, the tokens of thy sufferings and thy infinite love, behold me before thee, full of sorrow, indeed, for my sins, but also of confidence because thou hast offered satisfaction for me to the God whom I have offended. Hear the prayer which I now address thee when, meditating on thy holy passion, I excite in my soul sentiments of lively hope.

I adore the sacred wound in thy right hand; and by it I beseech thee to bestow thy most abundant favors on our holy Father the Pope and on all our superiors.

I adore the sacred wound in thy left hand; and by it I recommend to thee my relatives, my Brothers, and my pupils, to whom I beseech thee to grant special graces for their salvation.

I adore the sacred wound in thy right foot; and by it I ask of thee the perseverance of the just and the maintenance of all religious in the way of perfection.

I adore the sacred wound in thy left foot; and by

it I ask of thee, O Jesus, the conversion of sinners and the deliverance of the souls in purgatory.

I adore the sacred wound in thy side; and by it I commend to thee our holy mother the Church, and I supplicate thy mercy for myself. O Jesus, let me enter into thy open side, penetrate to thy divine heart, and by sincere love establish myself therein to dwell there for evermore.

Résumé, page 409.

Let us contemplate the innumerable wounds of the body of Jesus dead on the cross; above all, let us dwell on those of his hands and feet, and that of his side.

1. They are our work, the work of our sins.
2. They are, nevertheless, voices asking pardon for us.
3. They are asylums for repentant sinners.
4. They are channels whereby the graces of salvation flow over the earth.
5. They are the glorious ornaments of the Savior's humanity. They shall constitute the joy of the elect, whilst, for the reprobate, they shall be forever a cause of despair.

—Penetrated with these thoughts,

1. Let us weep over our sins and do penance for them.
2. Let us revive in our hearts the hope of pardon.
3. Let us, by mortification, reproduce in ourselves the sacred wounds of the Savior.
4. Let us kiss the marks of them on our crucifix.
5. Let us ask through each of them a special grace.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Taking him down from the cross, they laid him in a sepulchre.
—Acts xiii. 29.

CONSIDERATION

Jesus, the Author of life, has voluntarily suffered a most cruel death on the cross and has consummated the great mystery of our redemption. His heart has been pierced with a lance, and the last drops of divine blood contained therein have trickled down, hallowing the ground on which they fell.

Let us hasten to the mountain of the great Sacrifice, to the altar whereon the Lamb of God is slain. Mary, the august Mother of our generous Redeemer, is adoring the holy Victim and offering him to his heavenly Father with mingled sentiments of bitter sorrow and ardent love. The angels are forming a body-guard round the sacred body which is still hanging on the cross, and are paying it the homage of their adoration. The beloved disciple and the holy women linger, unable to leave the divine Crucified, the sole object of their love.

The day is drawing to a close, and the moment is nigh when the body of our divine Master must be buried, lest it be taken down from the cross by his enemies and ignominiously cast into the same grave with the two thieves. But let us not fear. That immaculate flesh shall not be confounded with the bodies of sinners; for

it must know no corruption, not even by contact. God, who will glorify it according to the degree to which it has been humbled, inspires Joseph of Arimathea, a just man and secret disciple of the Savior, to go boldly to Pilate and ask him for the body of Jesus. He also inspires Nicodemus, another secret disciple, to join him in burying the august Victim of mankind.

Let us contemplate them arriving at the cross, putting up ladders, and taking down with the greatest respect the body of their Master and their God. O who can at this moment read the soul of the most Blessed Virgin Mary! Who can imagine her sorrow when she receives in her arms the lifeless body of her divine Son, and presses it to her bosom, when she contemplates his closed eyes, his livid lips, his pallid face, and his blood-stained brow! O Mary, he whom thou dost clasp in thine arms is thy Son Jesus, the fairest of the children of men; but, alas! he can no longer be recognized save by a mother's love; such is the state to which our iniquities have reduced him.

O good Mother, by the sorrows which thou didst feel at the foot of the cross, deign to solicit our pardon from the God whom we have offended. Offer for our sins the saving Victim who is in thy arms, and by whom alone we hope to obtain mercy!

Having contemplated Mary weeping over the body of Jesus taken down from the cross, and having besought her to intercede for us with God, let us give proof that we share in her sorrows. Let us also in union with her, with St. John and the holy women, adore the divine body that was crucified for us. Let us follow the example of the beloved disciple who clasps the sacred body of his

Redeemer in his arms, rests his virginal head once more on that bosom, that sanctuary of infinite love, on which he had leaned at supper the evening before. Let us imitate Magdalen, who waters with her tears those divine feet at which she had found peace, and which are now so horribly mangled. Let us in spirit join the little group of pious persons present at the mournful ceremony of taking down the body of Jesus from the cross, and with them let us eagerly testify our respect for the sacred flesh of the incarnate God, and manifest our grief at his cruel and ignominious death. Let us excite in our hearts the sentiments with which they were animated; let us prostrate ourselves before the lifeless body of our Redeemer, and shed tears of sorrow over the work of our sins.

Let us also contemplate the Savior's cross after his body has been taken down from it; and let us venerate the precious wood, stained with his blood. No longer infamous and an instrument of torture, it has become a glorious trophy, the sign of salvation. It is a victorious standard planted on the summit of Calvary, destined for all ages to come to be the object of the profound veneration of the faithful.

O holy cross, sacred tree, receive our homage! Although bereft of the adorable body of Jesus, thou art and ever shalt be the altar whereon the Victim of our salvation is offered; the balance whereon his divine body far outweighed the sins of the world! On thee, O holy cross, the price of our redemption was paid! Though outwardly an instrument to be despised, thou art in reality a weapon of terrible power, since by thee the prince of darkness was vanquished and robbed of

his prey. Hail, glorious monument of the victory of the King of kings! Hail, sceptre to be borne on the last day in his almighty hand! I prostrate myself before thee, and contemplate thee, reddened with the blood of my Savior. At that sight love and confidence revive within my breast, and I cry out with the Church: "Hail, O cross, our only hope!"¹

APPLICATION

Let us Christians, who really possess on our altars the sacred body of our divine Savior, enter into the spirit of the mystery on which we have been meditating. Let us honor it, and religiously recall it to mind with the same sentiments of love and sorrow as animated the pious persons who took part in his burial on Calvary.

Let us often think of the grief of Mary at the foot of the cross, and especially of that which she experienced when she received into her arms the lifeless body of her divine Son. Through the love that we have for her, let us compassionate her in these sufferings, and especially let us deplore the sins which caused them.

Let us devoutly venerate the holy cross on which our divine Redeemer immolated himself, and keep it before our eyes. Let us often look upon it, and recall the great mystery wrought upon it. Let us excite in our hearts sentiments of lively confidence in the grace which Jesus merited for us by his sufferings and death.

Let us kiss with deep religious respect the particle of the true cross which the Church presents for our

¹Hymn *Vexilla Regis*.

veneration. Let us then make acts of sorrow for our faults, and of love and gratitude to him who has so loved us as voluntarily to sacrifice himself for our salvation.

PRAYER

Yes, O Jesus, I will venerate thy cross, I will esteem that sacred wood which is stained with thy blood, I will study that book which speaks so eloquently to us of thy zeal and of thy boundless charity. But, O my God, I will, at the same time, weep over sin which made thy immolation necessary; over sin which crucified thee and alone caused the sorrows that broke the heart of thy divine Mother.

I will weep, but I will also hope, because thy cross is the sign of hope. It tells me that thou hast redeemed me, that I am no longer a slave, that my chains are broken, my shame taken away, my freedom regained, my rights recovered; that I have become a child of God and an heir of Heaven.

It tells me that, although a miserable sinner, I am justified through it alone, and allowed to draw near thy sacred flesh, to receive thy divine body with the sentiments wherewith it was received by the holy personages who conveyed it from the cross to the sepulchre; to place it in my heart as in a tomb prepared for its reception. There it will sow the germ of resurrection and of everlasting life.

O Mary, we conjure thee by thy sorrows and by the sentiments with which thou didst receive into thy arms the lifeless body of thy divine Son, obtain for us

all the purity, piety, and love wherewith we ought to approach that sacred body, so that it may be really for us the saving Victim whose death will give us life.

Résumé, page 409.

Let us devoutly contemplate the descent from the cross :

1. The day is closing ; the Savior's body must soon be buried that it may not be thrown into the grave occupied by the thieves.

2. Joseph of Arimathea asks and obtains the sacred body.

3. Assisted by Nicodemus, he goes to perform the last sad rites.

4. Together they take it down from the cross.

5. They place it in the arms of Mary. They unite with her in adoring it.

—Let us also adore it, and

1. Weep for our sins, which have crucified Jesus.

2. Weep for our sins, which are the true cause of the sorrows of his Blessed Mother.

3. Venerate the cross, sanctified by contact with the sacred members of the Savior.

4. Renew our hope at sight of the emblem of our redemption.

5. In union with Mary, offer to Heaven Jesus crucified and dead for us.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION

JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

They laid him in a sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet any man had been laid.—Luke xxiii. 53.

CONSIDERATION

Let us return to Calvary to pay our last respects to the august Victim of our redemption. Let us unite with the holy persons who are performing that sad and pious ceremony; with them, let us not only show respect for that sacred body, but let us also adore it, because, though dead, it contains the plenitude of the divinity.

Let us contemplate the body of Jesus at first resting in the arms of Mary, the Mother of sorrows, bedewed with the tears of the beloved disciple and Magdalene, and then placed on the ground which is reddened with the precious blood. Joseph and Nicodemus kiss it respectfully, and discover, alas! innumerable wounds which the blood had concealed from their eyes: they then embalm it with myrrh and aloes, and wrap it in a long white veil.

Let us then behold them taking that precious burden in their arms and carrying it from the foot of the cross to the garden where the sepulchre, destined to receive it, has been hewn in the rock.

With what lively emotion should the sight of this mournful ceremony inspire us! Mary follows the body

of her divine Son, for so great is her maternal love that she cannot tear herself from him. The beloved disciple, Magdalene and the other holy women accompany her and shed tears unceasingly.

Let us contemplate them, and with the eyes of faith behold also the angels who surround and adore the body of the Word of God, by whom all things were made, and who now, at the close of the sixth day of the great week, after finishing the work of the new creation, is going to rest in the tomb, whence he will soon rise glorious.

The pious cortége arrives at the sepulchre and reverently places therein the sacred remains of the Savior. Those who have assisted at the burial again prostrate themselves, profoundly adoring the lifeless body and shedding floods of tears; they then retire from the cave which is closed with a great stone.

Who can describe the sentiments of their hearts, their profound grief, their bitter anguish! O Mary, what woe is thine! But since thou wast so blessed for having believed,¹ is not thy grief tempered by hope? Yes, dry thy tears, O desolate Mother, for thy Son is soon to be restored to thee. The tomb shall not long enclose his sacred remains; and in spite of the precautions of the Jews, in spite of the power of hell, his word shall be accomplished, and thou shalt see him again living and glorious.

O Christian souls who assist in spirit at the ceremony of the burial of your divine Savior, which is so fitted to excite in your hearts the most lively emotion, reflect on the nature of this mystery; consider, attentively,

¹Luke i. 45.

the motives from which your adorable Master allows his body to be buried and to be laid in the tomb!

Let us consider some of those which naturally suggest themselves:

Our Lord Jesus Christ willed to be buried and to remain in the tomb: 1. In order to leave no room to doubt the reality of his death, and, consequently, of his resurrection; 2. To verify the prophecy of Isaiah, that his sepulchre should be glorious;¹ and to accomplish what was prefigured by Joseph in prison, by Jonas in the whale's belly, by Daniel in the lion's den; 3. To make himself like unto us in everything except sin, and to share with us the humiliation of the tomb; 4. To induce us to be resigned to that inevitable humiliation, to diminish its terrors for us, and to lead us even to desire its coming.

Let us dwell for a moment on the last thought. Jesus being God, elevates, sanctifies, and makes desirable to Christians, who are his followers, every state through which he passes. To those that walk in his footsteps there is no longer anything really humiliating. As the cross itself becomes a glorious ensign, so also does the tomb, since our divine Master has deigned to be laid therein. It is no longer an object of horror to Christians, but rather a place of rest, into which, following their august chief, they enter after the warfare of this life, and there sleep with him, awaiting the great day of resurrection.

The burial of our Lord not only affords us consolation and revives our hope; it also instructs us in a sublime manner in our duties as Christians and re-

¹Isai. xi. 10.

ligious. "Buried with him in baptism,"¹ says St. Paul;—that is, by that sacrament, we have made a solemn promise to bury ourselves mystically with our divine Redeemer, in order to participate in the merits of his death and resurrection. Every Christian ought, therefore, to be dead to the world. He ought to be able to say: "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world."² I bear the same relation to the world as does a dead body that is already laid in the tomb. My life is hidden in God, and like the sacred body of Christ in the sepulchre, I have no concern but with God and his angels.

Happy they who, detached in mind and heart from the world and the things of the world, are mystically buried with Jesus Christ! Their souls enjoy repose amid the silence of the passions, and they are encouraged to perseverance by the well-founded hope of a glorious resurrection.

APPLICATION

If it is obligatory on all Christians to be dead to the world and to be buried with Jesus Christ, it is much more so on us religious, who have solemnly promised this, not only in receiving baptism, but also in following our vocation.

We have bid adieu to the world; we are exteriorly separated from it; we wear a habit which it considers a shroud: but are we interiorly detached from what we have left? Are we really dead to the world, to its vanities, its pleasures, and its maxims? Is our life

¹Col. ii. 12.

²Gal. vi. 14.

hidden with Christ in God? Are we buried with our divine Savior? Are we recollected, and do we religiously observe the silence prescribed us? If all our brethren were to act as we do, would our house be an image of the tomb of our Lord? Would it breathe that peace and piety which should always reign in religious communities?

Let us, then, from this day enter generously into the practice of silence and recollection; let us keep ourselves closely united with Jesus in the sepulchre, and we shall experience rest and hope. When, at last, death shall come upon us, we shall accept it with resignation and even with joy, in the thought that we shall thereby become more like unto our divine Head; and that, like the sabbath of the great week, our bodily rest in the tomb shall terminate with the day-dawn of the glorious resurrection.

PRAYER

O Jesus, my hope and my strength, thou hast called me by my baptism, and more especially by my religious vocation, to manifest in my conduct thy life, thy death, and thy burial, so that I may one day share in thy resurrection. I bless thee for thus remembering me, and I will try to correspond to all thy designs upon me.

I wish to reproduce mystically thy death and burial; I wish to be buried with thee, to think only of thee and of what concerns thy interests; I wish to have no more connection with the world, which I have so often renounced. But, Lord, I am weak. Wherefore, I implore the assistance of thy grace, that my good will may not

fail, and that, closing my ears to the noise of the world and my eyes to its seductive pomp, I may dwell with thee in the tomb of the religious life, in order to share one day in the glory of thy resurrection, and live with thee a life of everlasting happiness.

Résumé, page 410.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Nicodemus embalming the body of Jesus, wrapping it in a winding-sheet, and carrying it to the sepulchre. What are their sentiments?

What are Mary's sentiments?

Let us reflect that Jesus would be buried :

1. To remove all doubt as to the fact of his death, and also to accomplish what had been foretold of his burial.

2. To make himself in all things like unto us.

3. To sanctify the burial of Christians, who are members of his mystical body.

4. To induce us, by his example, to be resigned to the humiliation of the tomb.

5. To engage us also to shun the world and to esteem recollection, which is our spiritual burial.

—Penetrated with these truths :

1. Let us accept with resignation both death and its horrors.

2. Let us renounce the world, and be dead in its eyes.

3. Let us renew our baptismal promises.

4. Let us observe silence and recollection.

5. Let us bury ourselves with Jesus Christ.

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

THE SEPULCHRE OF JESUS CHRIST

His sepulchre shall be glorious.—Isai. xi. 10.

CONSIDERATION

The tomb is for man a subject of the most profound humiliation; for there his body, stricken down by death, becomes a prey to corruption, and soon is but a heap of rottenness and filth, an object at once of horror and of pity. But it is not so with the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, because his immaculate flesh remains, even after death, hypostatically united with the divinity. Hence he had said by the mouth of David: "My flesh shall rest in hope;" Thou wilt not abandon me in the tomb; "Nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption."¹ He had likewise prophesied by Isaiah, that his sepulchre should be glorious.² And such is really the case. It is with the sepulchre of Jesus as with his cross; from a monument of humiliation, it becomes, through him, a monument of glory which all generations shall honor, which nations shall dispute the privilege of possessing, which the great ones and princes of the earth shall be eager to visit; and which people of all lands shall come to venerate, praying meanwhile to him who was buried therein.

O how glorious is the sepulchre of our divine Savior

¹Ps. xv. 9, 10.

²Isai. xi. 10.

wherein he rested for a few hours in the sleep of death, awaiting the moment of his resurrection! Therein was inclosed the true Samson, guarded by the new Philistines; and thence he went forth, in the middle of the night, storming the gates of death, and passing through the midst of his terrified enemies.

Let us, then, go in spirit to the holy sepulchre. Let us honor it as the trophy of Christ's victory over death. As we behold it, let us excite in our hearts an abiding trust that, Jesus being our Head, our tomb like his, shall become glorious on the day when the Lord shall raise to everlasting life those who have been united with him on earth; those who, faithful to their baptismal promises, have been dead to the world, and buried with their divine Master, those who, entering into the spirit of the mystery of his burial, have understood its lessons and endeavored to apply them.

Let us, then, consider what has been revealed to us of the sepulchre of our Lord, so that, knowing more intimately our adorable Model and all-powerful Mediator, we may comprehend what we ought to do to become like unto him, and to merit to be associated with him in his resurrection.

Let us remark, first, that this sepulchre belongs to Joseph of Arimathea; that thus Jesus practised poverty in a sublime manner to the end of his life, for, even in death he had not where to lay his head.¹

Let us next remark that the sepulchre is not far distant from Calvary. We are thus reminded that it is by the sufferings of the cross that the calm repose of Christian burial is obtained, and that he shall sleep in

¹Matt. viii. 20.

peace with Christ, who, by patience and mortification, has been crucified with him.

This sepulchre is hewn in the rock: let us learn therefrom that it is by hard and constant labor that we shall dispose our hearts to become the dwelling of Jesus Christ.

The sepulchre is in a garden, thus reminding us that the faithful soul, in which Christ dwells, ought to be adorned with the flowers of exterior virtues; that it ought to be known by an edifying conduct, by the good example which it gives and by the outward diffusion of the good odor of Jesus abiding within.

The sepulchre is guarded by the enemies of Jesus, lest any one should come to carry off the body which it enclosed. But, as David had foretold,¹ their precautions are a snare to them, because they will only serve to prove more conclusively the resurrection of our divine Savior. Let us learn therefrom that all merely human wisdom is folly before God; that in vain do men oppose the designs of his Providence, for those designs are always accomplished, and often by the very means employed to frustrate them.

The sepulchre in which the body of our divine Savior reposes is new, free from corruption, and from dead men's bones; and his precious remains are wrapped in a white shroud. Could he better make known to us that he dwells only in hearts that are pure, in hearts that are free from the defilement of mortal sin?

But this is not enough. In order that Jesus may take pleasure in us, he must also find in us the virtues proper to Christians, as indeed, we are reminded by the cir-

¹Ps. xxxiv, 8,

cumstances of his burial: mortification and penance, symbolized by the myrrh and aloes wherewith his divine body was embalmed—exterior retreat, recalled by the sealed stone that closes the entrance of the tomb—interior recollection, typified by the darkness and silence that reign within the monument. He furthermore demands of us the virtues specially represented by the persons who assisted at his burial—the justice of Joseph of Arimathea, the generosity of Nicodemus, the penance of Mary Magdalen, the charity of St. John, the piety of the holy women. Lastly, as far as possible, our hearts must be like the most holy heart of Mary. Happy are they who present to Jesus this goodly train of virtues! Happy are they whose hearts are adorned with such a degree of perfection, for they are sepulchres wherein Jesus reposes, imparting even to their bodies the germ of a glorious and eternal life!

APPLICATION

With a very different purpose from that of the Jews, who remain near the holy sepulchre to falsify the prophecy of Jesus, let us also keep watch, but with the desire of glorifying our divine Savior. Let us beseech him to come and dwell in us, and to implant the germ of life everlasting, which he has merited for us by his sufferings and death. But let us endeavor to prepare for him a worthy dwelling place by a more perfect practice of the Christian virtues recalled to our minds by the circumstances of his burial.

Let Jesus find in us the myrrh of mortification, the flowers of modesty, the white shroud of purity. Let our

hearts, like the rock in which he was buried, be solidly established in faith and charity; let them be new, exempt from all other affection than love for Jesus. Let us by the practice of retreat and silence, close them to every report and to every spectacle from without; let recollection be to our souls like the sealed stone placed at the entrance of the sepulchre, or the soldiers that kept guard against the approach of strangers.

Let us practise these virtues, especially when we are about to receive holy Communion. Let us remember that the Eucharist is the mystic sepulchre of Jesus Christ, which all the faithful of all ages of the Church are called to venerate. Let us go often in spirit to the Savior's sepulchre; and there let us shut ourselves up with him, close our ears to the tumult from without, and in silent contemplation, give up our souls to sentiments of regret, pity, love, and gratitude.

PRAYER

O Jesus, thou dost permit thy sepulchre to be my refuge, where, far from all worldly bustle, my soul may delight in thy holy company. There it is I may find thee, O my Beloved, my Lord and my God, source of the glorious life to which I aspire!

O loving Redeemer, who, to make us sharers in the merits of thy burial, dost mystically continue it in the Holy Eucharist and permit me to receive thee so often into my heart; grant, I beseech thee, that I may communicate with all the requisite dispositions which thou hast made known to me during this meditation, so that resting now in the sepulchre of my heart, thou mayst

implant therein the germ of a glorious resurrection and of that eternal life which thou dost possess in its fullness.

Résumé, page 410.

Let us go to the tomb of Jesus and learn the lessons which it teaches us.

1. This tomb belongs to a stranger; Jesus is poor.

2. This tomb is near Calvary; it is the cross that merits for us the repose and the burial of saints.

3. This tomb is new and cut in a rock: our heart should never have belonged to any but Jesus; it ought to be solidly established in him.

4. This tomb is guarded; is our heart guarded?

5. This tomb is in a garden; is our heart separated from the world and adorned with the flowers of virtue?

—That Jesus may be pleased with it, he must find in it:

1. The myrrh of mortification.

2. The white shroud of innocence.

3. The justice of Joseph of Arimathea, the generosity of Nicodemus.

4. The piety and the charity of Saint John.

5. To some extent, the piety and charity of the most Blessed Virgin.

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

You seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here; for he is risen.—Matt. xxviii. 5, 6.

CONSIDERATION

We have witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, our beloved Savior; we have seen him enduring every species of torment; we have contemplated him dead on the cross, with his heart pierced by a lance; we have considered him in the arms of his holy and afflicted Mother; and, finally, we have visited him in the sepulchre around which his enemies keep watch.

O how desolate at this moment is the state of the infant Church! Its supreme Head is dead and buried; the apostles and disciples, sad and discouraged, hide themselves and think of dispersing; the holy society they are called to found appears doomed to destruction; the enemies of Jesus are triumphant, and boast of having put to death him whose wisdom and power they so greatly envied.

Nevertheless, their joy is not free from uneasiness: for they remember that when they asked of Jesus a sign in proof of his divinity, he had told them that he would accomplish what had been prefigured by the prophet Jonas,¹ and would rise the third day after his death. That third day is not yet past: as, therefore,

¹Ps. xxxiv. 8; cxi. 10.

they are not delivered from this fear, they carefully guard the sepulchre, which they have closed with a large stone and sealed with the seals of the nation. But what can they do against the Almighty? Of what avail are the sealed stone which closes the entrance of the tomb, and the armed soldiers who guard it, if not to render more incontestable the fact whose accomplishment they so much dread? Their precautions are but snares to themselves: "They fall into their own nets," as the prophet had foretold.

The divine body of Jesus reposes in the tomb, whilst his most holy soul, going down into Limbo, consoles the just of the Old Law, and announces to them their speedy deliverance. No doubt Jesus gives as a sign thereof, the resurrection which he is about to effect, by the power of the divinity to which his soul is united, by re-animating the sacred body from which his soul was separated by death.

Let us go in spirit to the Savior's tomb at the moment when the day of rest is drawing to an end, and that third day so anxiously expected is about to begin. Let us adore that sacred body motionless in death, wrapped in a shroud, and covered with spices, as though needing to be preserved from corruption. Behold! the moment has arrived. The soul of Jesus penetrates into the sepulchre; it unites with his body; it restores to it feeling, color, beauty, strength, and motion. And the Savior taking up again the life that he had laid down, frees his body from the bands and grave-clothes in which it is wrapped, and goes forth from the tomb without removing the stone that closed the entrance, or breaking the seals affixed thereto.

O miracles of miracles! O happy night in which it is wrought! night whereof it is said that it is brighter than day! Jesus goes forth living and glorious from the tomb! He frees himself from the arms of affrighted death,—he breaks the bands wherewith it binds him,—and proves that he is truly the Son of God. O how admirably he confounds the designs of his enemies, and defeats the projects of hell!

He who was covered with wounds, fastened to the cross, and drained of his blood, is now full of life and beauty. His body, which but lately resembled that of a leper, has put on eternal youth, and is more luminous than light itself. For him, the cross is changed into a sceptre, Calvary into a scene of glory, the tomb into a monument of triumph. The resurrection is an accomplished fact; a new creation is effected; and Holy Church is about to dry her tears and share in the glory of her divine Spouse.

The holy women are already hastening to the sepulchre, and will soon be followed by the apostles. They see that the stone which closed the entrance is removed. As they draw near, an angel appears to them, and announces the Savior's resurrection: "Fear not," he said; "you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified; he is risen; he is not here!"

Yes, Jesus is risen! the angel proclaims it, and every thing tends to show it: the tomb is empty; the body that had been laid within and carefully guarded, is no longer there; the grave-clothes are still there, but folded as if they had not been used. There is no trace of death there; but, on the contrary, there is evidence of immortality. Their hearts are renewed in hope, souls

are illumined with the light of faith. Thence they depart with a deep conviction of the resurrection, and, consequently, of the divinity of our Lord. How sweet, then, it is to be buried with the thoughts and feelings inspired by faith in this mystery!

Jesus is risen: he is, therefore, God; hence his doctrine is divine, his Church is divine, and his promises are divine. The work of our redemption is accomplished, the chains of our slavery are broken, and the Victim of Calvary is really our divine Victim. Sin is destroyed, the sting of death is taken away, the hope of eternal happiness is restored, and we are reconciled with heaven. Hence joy has followed our sadness, and now overflows our hearts.

In dying as a victim on Calvary, Jesus gave his life to fulfill the sentence which condemned man to death; and in rising again, he has taken a new life which he communicates to us who are his children. Let us receive that life with the greatest joy and the profoundest gratitude.

Jesus is risen; but he is our Head: we, then, who are his members, shall rise again; and each of us may now repeat those words of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth; I shall see my God."¹ O how this thought consoles us who are under the necessity of dying! For the faithful who are united with Jesus, the tomb is only a place where they repose for a time in death, but whence, like him and by him, they shall go forth living and glorious.

¹Job xix. 25, 26.

APPLICATION

Let us animate our hearts with lively hope. Let us have confidence. Our Head has triumphed, we shall triumph with him; he has taken from death its sting, and merited for us a glorious resurrection. But let us often call to mind that it was necessary for Christ to suffer, and so enter into his glory;¹ and that it is by our likeness to him, we shall merit to share in his resurrection.

Let our souls thrill with joy at the contemplation of Jesus risen; let us celebrate his triumph, let us chant his glory; let us, by our eagerness in his service, and especially by our fidelity to grace, testify to him our gratitude for the new life which he has given us. Let us love with our whole heart the new Adam, who has regenerated humanity, and more than repaired all the evil of the first sin; and let us exclaim with the Church: "O happy fault which has merited for us such a Redeemer!"²

Let us beseech Jesus risen to visit our souls, to bless them, to give them peace, and to preserve to them that life of grace which he has communicated to them, and which is one day to be changed into the life of glory.

PRAYER

O Jesus, all powerful conqueror, destroyer of sin, of death and of hell, who by thy resurrection dost triumph over thy enemies, thou didst yield to death only to conquer and destroy it, and to give us also strength and

¹Luke xxiv. 26.

²*Exultet*, Office of Holy Saturday.

courage to triumph over it. Thou openest to us, O Lord, by this victory so complete and so glorious, the gates of eternal life which had been closed against us by our sins; and thou dost animate us with the liveliest feelings of joy, hope and love.

O Jesus, deign to preserve in us these sentiments, so that, profiting by the new life which thou hast given us, we may become worthy of the eternal life which is its consummation, and which thou wilt impart to all those who, on earth, have shared in thy sufferings and thy death.

Résumé, page 411.

Let us in spirit return to the last moment in the great week of the Passion.

Let us think of the sad state of the infant Church at that hour.

But behold the hour foretold by Christ:

1. His soul goes forth from limbo.
2. Angelic choirs form its train.
3. It enters into his divine body from which it had been separated, and takes possession of it.

4. It gives life, strength, and beauty.

5. Jesus rises gloriously.

—O mystery of mysteries! What a subject of joy!

1. Our faith is confirmed, our hope assured.
2. The divinity of Jesus is proved.
3. His Church is founded.
4. Death is conquered, our own glorious resurrection is merited.
5. It is already begun in that of our adorable Head.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION

GOOD FRIDAY

The just perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart.—

Isai. lvii. 1.

CONSIDERATION

Behold the day on which the great Sacrifice is accomplished, the debt of guilty humanity paid, divine justice satisfied, earth purified, and hell vanquished,—the day on which we became, at the foot of the cross, children of Mary and heirs of heaven. Oh! how can we recall any moment of that day, or of the preceding night, without being deeply moved and shedding tears of compassion, regret, love, and gratitude?

That night is the ever memorable Holy Thursday on which Jesus, after giving himself to us in the adorable sacrament, began his passion in Gethsemane by the voluntary shedding of his blood, and afterwards gave himself up to his enemies, and appeared before Annas, and before Caiphas.

When the day dawns he is confined in a narrow cell; he goes forth to the great council of the Jews, by which he is delivered up to Pilate. Thence he is sent by the Roman governor to Herod, who, in his turn, remands the divine Prisoner to Pilate. For three hours, the adorable Victim is thus dragged from one tribunal to another, being everywhere loaded with ignominy, and

subjected to the most shameful and the most revolting treatment.

Then he had to endure anew the questioning of Pilate, the clamors of the Jews, rejection in favor of Barabbas, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the sentence of death, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, and finally the three hours' agony on the cross, with all its accompanying circumstances, from the moment when he prays for his executioners till that when, uttering a loud cry, he bows his head and expires; nay, even till his body, after being taken down from the cross and placed in Mary's arms, is at last wrapped in a winding-sheet and borne to the tomb.

There is not a moment of the day which may not furnish us with the most salutary reflections. Nevertheless, we shall not pause on each in particular; but consider in a general way the principal virtues of which Jesus gives us an example. Our adorable Master, successively imparts these lessons in the house of Caiphas, in the streets of Jerusalem, in the pretorium, and on Calvary; and everywhere he teaches us charity, patience, obedience, humility, and generosity.

And first charity.—He sacrifices himself, that all may know that he loves his Father, and that he does his Father's will;¹ he sacrifices himself, that we may know the extent of his love for us: it is his love for his Father and for us that leads him to Calvary and nails him to the cross. He had said: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."² This proof our Savior has given us on this day so justly commemorated by the Church. Each of

¹John xiv. 31.

²John xv. 13.

us may henceforth say with St. Paul: "Jesus loved me, and delivered himself for me."¹

Yes, Jesus loved us even to the shedding of all his blood for our salvation! Can we, then, still hesitate to love him and to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service? Nor should we neglect the interests of our neighbor, whoever he be, since he represents to us Jesus Christ himself. Moreover, our divine Savior has said: "Love one another as I have loved you."²

During the whole course of his passion, Jesus, by his example, teaches us patience and meekness. Lion of the tribe of Juda,³ possessed of almighty power, having but to will it to bring down from heaven "more than twelve legions of angels,"⁴ or even to annihilate his enemies, he appears, nevertheless, "dumb as a lamb before his shearer."⁵ He leaves all power to the empire of darkness, and seeks only to be a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity."⁶ His enemies spend their rage upon him; and he bears it without a complaint, treating them with kindness, meekness and love!

He teaches the virtue of obedience in the most sublime manner. He renounces his own will to do the will of his Father, and accepts the chalice that is offered to him. He fulfils exactly all that had been written of him in Holy Scripture, so that before his death he can truly exclaim: "All is consummated."⁷ He has obeyed in everything that was commanded him; he has obeyed all, even his executioners; he has sacrificed his repose, his honor, and his life, to obedience. "He humbled him-

¹Gal. ii. 20.

²John xiii. 34.

³Apoc. v. 5.

⁴Matt. xxvi. 53.

⁵Isai. liii. 7.

⁶*Ibid.* 3.

⁷John xix. 30.

self," says St. Paul, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."¹ What a model for Christians, and especially for religious!

But to what a degree our adorable Master carries the practice of humility! Though most high God, and King of kings, he debases himself, taking the form of a servant.² He had said by the mouth of David: "I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people; all they that saw me have laughed me to scorn,"³ He has fulfilled, in his passion, every detail of the prophecy. Though Son of God, co-equal with his Father, and worthy of the adoration of heaven and earth, he is "reputed with the wicked,"⁴ rejected for Barabbas, and abandoned to the contempt of all. The Holy of holies, he appears as a wretched criminal covered with opprobrium, and is delivered over to a most infamous death!

And how great is his generosity! He sacrifices himself for us who were his enemies. He prays to his heavenly Father for his executioners. To obtain their pardon, he offers up the cross on which he is nailed, and the blood that flows from his veins. At the very moment when he is afflicted with the greatest pain, he forgets himself to think of us, and from the cross, gives us Mary for our Mother. After he has expired, he sheds upon us, from his riven heart, the greatest treasures of his grace.

Behold, Christian souls, what a model is to-day "shown us on the mount."⁵ Happy are they who make it their whole study to become like unto him!

¹Phil. ii. 8.²*Ibid.* 6, 7.³Ps. xxi. 7, 8.⁴Isai. liii. 12.⁵Exod. xxv. 40.

APPLICATION

Let us, from the bottom of our hearts, adore Jesus immolating himself for us. Prostrate at the foot of his cross, let us unite with his holy Mother in weeping over his sorrows, and rekindle our sentiments of love and gratitude for his mercies. Let us give ourselves to him for ever. Has he not purchased us at an exceeding great price? How, then, can we dare think of withholding our services from him?

Let us weep over our sins, the true cause of his sufferings and death, and resolve to commit them no more. Let us take from our hearts all resentment and antipathy. To-day is the great day of God's mercy to us; why should it not be for us the day of forgiving all the injuries that may have been done us? When Jesus prays for his executioners, can any Christian close his heart against his brethren?

"Jesus sacrificed on the tree of the cross," says St. Bernard, "is the cause, the motive, and the model of all our sacrifices." Let us unite ourselves to him more and more, and draw from that union strength and courage to walk in his footsteps. Let us labor, by his grace to die to ourselves, to our self-love, and to our passions, for such is his will. Besides, nothing is more advantageous to us; for this mystical death is the beginning of our true life, since it enables us to share all the treasures that he has acquired for us by his sufferings and death.

PRAYER

O Jesus, Author of life, who diest to-day to save me from eternal death, deign to apply to my soul the merits

of thy immolation. Grant that, weeping over thy sorrows and my sins, I may persevere in the closest union with thee, and so obtain the salvation which thou hast merited for me. Amen.

Résumé, page 61.

Behold the day of the great sacrifice! How full of instruction it is for us!

Let us consider how it manifests our adorable Savior's virtues:

1. His charity towards men.
2. His patience, resignation, and meekness.
3. His obedience, even to the death of the cross.
4. His humility: "He is reputed with malefactors!"
5. His generosity: He dies for those who crucify him.

—What a model! To-day, then, in a special manner:

1. Let us adore the divine Victim suffering and dying for us.

2. Let us weep over his sorrows.

3. Let us weep over our sins, which are their true cause.

4. Let us pardon those who may have offended us.

5. Let us unite ourselves to Jesus crucified, and remain united to him even till death.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION

HOLY SATURDAY

He rested on the seventh day.—Gen. ii. 2.

CONSIDERATION

Let us meditate on the repose of Jesus in the sepulchre. What subject can we choose to-day more conformable to the spirit of the Church and more fruitful in salutary instruction?

Let us go to the tomb of our divine Savior; let us enter it with sentiments of the most affectionate piety. Let us consider his divine body given up for yet another day to the power of death. Let us contemplate his motionless head, his pallid face, his closed eyelids, his lacerated brow, his pierced hands and feet, his open side, his wounded heart; and let us recall what our adorable Redeemer suffered for our salvation.

Let us adore him in his state of rest, which he merited by so much toil and patience. O Jesus, thou art that generous workman who, entering the vineyard at the first hour, bore the whole burden and heat of the day. Thou hast watered with thy sweat and thy blood the furrow which thou didst dig. Thou hast closed thy career, finished thy task. Yes, thou hast, indeed, fulfilled thy mission: for thou hast satisfied divine justice, expiated sin and repaired its ravages, founded the Church, regenerated humanity, vanquished hell, and

opened heaven. Yesterday thou didst cry out from the height of thy cross: "All is consummated!"¹ It only remained for thee to enter into thy rest, where, nevertheless, thou dost continue thy work of salvation, and whence thou ceasest not to instruct us.

Jesus in the sepulchre honors his Father who also rested on the seventh day.² He has just finished the new creation: like his Father he has considered the work that he has accomplished, and has seen that it is good;³ then, having ceased from his dolorous labor, he is resting on this seventh day⁴ of the great week,—a mysterious rest which had been prefigured in the Old Testament by types that are full of instruction for us.

The repose of Jesus on the cross or in the tomb, had been prefigured by the sleep of the first man in the terrestrial paradise. Jesus is the new Adam: scarcely is he sleeping the sleep of death when, from his open side, flow forth the blood and water which are to form the Church, his most holy Spouse, the Mother of the living.

It had also been prefigured by the captivity of the patriarch Joseph, who passed suddenly from prison to court, from chains to the height of glory, and who was called the savior of the world.

It had been prefigured by the sleep of Samson in the city of Gaza. Jesus, the true Samson, the Mighty One, the Wonderful, is in the sepulchre surrounded by watchful guards; but the moment is at hand when he shall bear away the gates of the city of death, even through the midst of his terrified enemies.

The repose of Jesus in the tomb had been prefigured

¹John xix. 30.

²Gen. ii. 2.

³*Ibid.* i. 31.

⁴*Ibid.* ii. 2.

by the imprisonment of Jonas in the whale's belly, whence the prophet came forth alive, in order to announce the truths of salvation to the Ninevites. It had also been prefigured by Daniel in the lion's den, whence that man of wonders was brought forth safe and sound, to the confusion of his enemies, who were themselves cast in and met with speedy death.

Jesus rests in the sepulchre to celebrate the last sabbath of the Mosaic law as he had celebrated, at the supper, its last Pasch. But the rest is only a figure of that whereon he shall enter to-morrow by his resurrection: hence that morrow is the first day of the week which henceforth shall be the Lord's day, the Sabbath of the New Law.

Jesus rests; nevertheless, he is not inactive. His body is, indeed, motionless; but his soul is in Limbo consoling the just of the Old Law, giving them, by his presence, a foretaste of the happiness which they shall soon enjoy with him and through him in heaven. Nor does he now cease to act in this world where, by his grace, he enlightens, strengthens, and consoles his disciples, and, by his providence, so regulates all things as to defeat the designs of his enemies, whose very precautions shall prove a snare to them.¹

Jesus rests in death; but he is our Head,—we all shall share his rest. The burial of Christians is for them only the seventh-day rest; for, having accomplished the work for which they were placed on this earth, they can at their last hour say with truth, "All is consummated." Death is for them but a sleep whose waking is bright with hope. Like Jesus in the tomb, they are in peace,

¹Ps. xxxiv. 8.

awaiting the dawn of the great day, when they shall enter on a life of never-ending glory and happiness.

APPLICATION

Let us adore the divine body which was laid in the sepulchre by the pious Joseph of Arimathea and by Nicodemus. Let us honor Jesus reposing in the arms of death and awaiting the hour for loosing the bands that bind him.

But there is also a repose prefigured by that on which he is to enter by his resurrection, and which he has merited for us by his toils and sufferings. He is the Good Shepherd, come to us his wandering sheep; he has wearied himself in seeking us; he has taken us in his arms, and carried us back to the fold. He is our Master, come down from heaven to teach us. He has everywhere announced his holy word; he has called all nations to him; and now he rests close by his cross, the sublime pulpit from which he gave men his last instructions.

God, his Father, rested after completing the work of creation; in like manner does our divine Savior rest to-day after accomplishing the work of our redemption by shedding the last drop of his blood..

Let us honor his burial on Calvary by a most lively and affectionate devotion to the Eucharist, which is his mystical burial. Let us fix our eyes upon the tabernacle, and think of the treasure which it contains. Under the veil of the sacramental species the sacred body of our divine Master is really present,—the same body that was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a white shroud,

and placed in the sepulchre whence it afterwards arose glorious.

Let us reverently and piously pay him our homage, and by our love and gratitude testify to him our unreserved devotedness to his service.

Let us reflect that on the days when we have the happiness of receiving holy communion, our hearts are, likewise, the sepulchre of Jesus Christ. Let us, then, carefully prepare them for him, that he may strengthen them by his divinity, and sow in them the seed of life eternal. To-morrow our divine Savior is coming to us. Let our souls, therefore, be, as far as possible, fit resting-places for him—tabernacles resplendent with the gold of charity, and adorned with the flowers of purity, humility, and piety.

Let us honor the burial of Jesus Christ, by the exterior and interior retirement proper to our state. As religious, let us remember that we have quitted the world, that we are dead to it and are buried with Jesus Christ. Let us, then, make it our delight to dwell with our admirable Master, to keep ourselves in his holy presence, to visit him in his sacrament,—in a word, to live with him and for him.

Happy are they who act thus! United with Jesus Christ, the first Born from the dead,¹ and the Author of life, they apply to themselves the fruits of his redemption, they accomplish works that are meritorious for eternity; and when they shall reach the end of their labors here below, they shall sleep in peace the death of the just, resting in the hope of beginning, on the great day of the general resurrection, a life that will never end.

¹Col. 1. 18.

PRAYER

O Jesus, divine Victim immolated for us on the cross and inclosed within our holy tabernacles, in union with thy most holy Mother, I honor thy death and burial, and I beseech thee to apply to me the merits thereof. Grant that, dying by thy grace, to the world and to my passions, to live only by thee, with thee, and for thee, I may become worthy to rise in glory, and to celebrate in heaven, with the angels and saints, thy triumph over death and hell.

Résumé, page 62.

Let us meditate on the repose of Jesus Christ in the sepulchre:

1. A rest preceded by fatigues and infinite suffering.
2. A rest like that of God the Father on the seventh day of creation.
3. A rest prefigured by Adam's trance, by the captivity of Joseph, by the sleep of Samson.
4. A rest during which Jesus Christ ceased not to act.
5. A rest in which we shall participate if we die in union with our divine Redeemer.

—To honor this rest:

1. Let us reflect by what labors he merited it.
2. Let us be the most devout to the Eucharist, his mystical sepulchre.
3. Let us receive him with great piety into our hearts, which he makes his tomb.
4. Let us bury ourselves with him by dying to the world, the devil, and our passions.
5. Let us cherish the firm hope of rising gloriously with him.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION

MAY 3—FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS

Blessed is the wood by which justice cometh.—Wisdom. xiv. 7.

CONSIDERATION

Let us call to mind the event which the Church commemorates to-day, and presents as a consoling subject of meditation, to the piety of the faithful. St. Helena, visiting the places consecrated by the presence of Jesus Christ in his mortal life, orders search to be made for the True Cross and the other instruments of the passion. The excavations made on Calvary result in the discovery of the Savior's Cross, and the crosses of the thieves who were put to death with him. By a striking miracle the True Cross is soon distinguished from the others, and becomes the object of the veneration due to it. Let us also lovingly pay homage to it, that we may advance in sanctity; and the better to dispose ourselves thereto, let us consider the different aspects under which faith presents it to our veneration.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the sacred altar whereon the adorable Victim of our salvation was immolated, and the bloody sacrifice which satisfied divine justice for us and reconciled us with heaven, was consummated. It was on this wood that the Lamb, immolated from the beginning in intention and figure, was in reality sacrificed in the fulness of time. It was on this wood

that our divine Redeemer suffered every torment and all manner of ignominy, and through his lacerated veins poured forth all his blood. It was on this wood that he slept the sleep of death, during which, by means of a soldier's lance, he opened to us his side and his heart, in order to bestow upon us, with the last drop of his blood, all the treasures of his love. From the moment when his immolation was completed, we were no longer children of wrath; for he had destroyed sin, vanquished hell, restored peace, and opened heaven.

Let us then, at sight of the cross, remember the work accomplished thereon, and bless our loving Lord who became a Victim for us. Everything indeed proclaims his love; but nothing so eloquently as his cross: that sacred wood is the most expressive monument of his infinite charity.

Whosoever truly loves, shows it by his devotedness to those whom he loves, by the sacrifice of his interests to theirs, and, if need be, by the sacrifice of his life. This is the last effort of love: for, says Jesus Christ, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹ Now, of what does the cross remind us, if not of the most absolute devotedness of the Son of God to our interests, and the sacrifice that he made, even of his life, to save us from eternal death?

The cross, which speaks to us so eloquently of the love of Jesus Christ for men, also makes known to us, in the most admirable manner, what it most concerns us to know and to practise; for it is a pulpit from which he imparts to us his most precious teachings. The cross reminds us of the goodness of God to us, and recalls

¹John xv. 13.

those words of the Savior: "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son"¹ for its salvation. It instructs us as to the value of souls, the enormity of sin, and the rigor of divine justice. It teaches us to die to ourselves to live the life of the divine Crucified.

The cross loudly proclaims the great precept of forgiving injuries, loving our enemies, and preserving that charity that ought to animate the faithful. And how is it possible to turn our eyes to that wood, without immediately recalling these maxims of our divine Master: "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, pray for those who persecute you;"² "Love one another, as I have loved you!"³

Yes, from the cross we learn the most sublime and the most salutary teachings. Hence it is the book of the elect, and has been read with delight by St. Bernard, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, nay, by all the saints; for all have said, at least by their conduct, what St. Francis de Sales expressed by word of mouth: "It is good for us to be with the cross. Here it is that I will watch, and read, and meditate, having that divine book constantly before my eyes and in my thoughts, that I may learn from it the science of salvation."

The saints contemplated the crucifix with faith, and their hearts were inflamed with charity, and their minds enlightened with the sublimest truths. We too would obtain like results if we studied its lessons with the same interior dispositions. The Savior's cross is the channel of grace. Placed between heaven and earth, it is the ladder by which our prayers ascend to God, and bring back to us their merciful answers.

¹John iii. 16.

²Matt. v. 44.

³John xiii. 34.

The sight of the brazen serpent cured the bite of the fiery serpent: so does the contemplation of Jesus crucified heal our spiritual maladies. How many desolate and discouraged souls have found, at the foot of the cross, consolation, hope, and grace to accomplish the greatest and most heroic sacrifices! How many sinners, kneeling before the cross, have been purified by the divine blood which flowed down upon them from the dying Savior!

The cross is almost constantly before our eyes in our houses; we carry it about us; with it we sign our forehead, our mouth, and our breast. We are, so to say, inseparable from the cross; it will be placed in our hands at our last hour, it will be pressed to our dying lips, and in its presence we shall breathe our last sigh. After our death, it will be placed on our body, then over our grave, and thus, resting in its shadow, we shall await the day of our resurrection.

Pondering these thoughts, let us, then, say: "Hail, O Cross, our only hope!"¹ Thou art the ladder by which my soul will ascend to heaven; the warrant of my justification, by which I shall obtain mercy from the Supreme Judge; the tree by which the evil committed under the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil, is fully repaired; the balance in which my Savior's merits outweigh my iniquities, and entitle me to eternal felicity!

APPLICATION

Let us, in union with the Church, profoundly venerate the Savior's Cross: let us salute it with respect; let us

¹Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

honor it wherever we meet it; let us teach our pupils to venerate it. Let us piously kiss our crucifix; let us contemplate it with deep emotion, and dwell on the many precious memories which it recalls to our minds; let us unceasingly raise our hearts to Jesus immolating himself for us.

Let us honor our spiritual crosses: let us conduct ourselves, in the troubles and afflictions of life, as becomes true disciples of our Savior. Let us accept our crosses with resignation, thinking that they come to us from God, our good Father, who tries us only because he loves us, and who desires our happiness more than we ourselves can do.

Let us bear them with patience, through love for Jesus, and with a view to imitate him. O if we truly loved our sweet Savior, how we would appreciate every cross! how fond we would be of it! how we would bless it for making us conformed to him!

Moreover, what is our cross in comparison with his? He drained to the dregs the chalice of humiliation and sorrow for our sakes; can we, then, refuse to taste of it for his sake and to apply his merits to ourselves? As disciples of Jesus Christ, let us imitate our Master; let us attach ourselves to the cross and remain there with him. Let us then be resigned, and even content and joyous, in imitation of the saints, saying with St. Teresa, "To suffer, or die;" or with St. Francis Xavier, "Yet more, O Lord!"

Let us offer our sufferings to God, with a view to adore him, to expiate our sins, and to draw down his graces, remembering that the prayers offered on the cross are most powerful over his sacred heart.

PRAYER

O Jesus, my divine Savior, who, by thy cross, didst redeem the world, give me grace to honor that sacred wood in a becoming manner. Grant, I beseech thee, that imitating thee in thy sufferings, I may attach myself to the cross with thee, to remain there till the day when by it I shall be raised to everlasting glory.

Résumé, page 120.

Blessed be the cross of Jesus Christ! It is,

1. The sacred altar on which the divine Victim was immolated.

2. A monument of his love for us.

3. A sublime pulpit; the book of the saints.

4. A channel of grace, the hope of the faithful, our protection against divine justice, our title to justification.

5. A ladder to heaven, by which we may ascend to God.

—Let us honor it in union with the Church. But let us also honor the crosses that Jesus Christ wishes us to carry.

1. Let us cheerfully accept all our pains and troubles.

2. Let us learn to bear them for the love of Jesus Christ.

3. Let us think of what he suffered for us.

4. Let us not murmur like the bad thief, and wish to descend from our cross.

5. Let us imitate the saints of all times, and suffer without complaint.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION

FIRST SUNDAY OF JULY—THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Lord, thou hast redeemed us in thy blood.—Apoc. v. 9.

CONSIDERATION

“We venerate the precious blood which Jesus, dying on the cross, shed for us through so many and such wounds.” It is in these words that the Church, in her office, informs us of the object of this feast. “Let this day,” she adds, “be a memorial for you, and let it be celebrated in all generations.”¹ This day, in fact, commemorates the shedding of the divine blood whereby we have been redeemed, a figurative and prophetic effusion, commenced, accomplished, yet mystically continued, and unceasingly producing its salutary effects.

At the moment when the Son of God offered himself to his Father, saying: “Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst require; then said I, ‘Behold I come,’”² he pledged himself to shed his blood in expiation for our sins; and, as in intention he had already poured it forth, the apostle St. John calls him, “the Lamb which was slain from the beginning.”³

To commemorate that engagement, and to prefigure its object, God willed that animals should everywhere be immolated, and that their blood should flow on the

¹Office of the Precious Blood.

²Ps. xxxix. 7, 8.

³Apoc. xiii. 8.

altars, under the knife of priests of his holy religion. He prescribed sacrifices symbolical of that which was to be accomplished on Calvary, and thus announced beforehand, the bloody immolation in which Jesus was to be both Priest and Victim. Let us also recall his prescription in reference to the Paschal lamb, and especially these words: "The blood shall be unto you for a sign in the houses where you shall be."¹

The prophets spoke of the shedding of the divine Blood.—"Who is this," says Isaias, "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments? Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine-press?"² The prophet Zachary, also speaking to the Lord, says: "Thou, also, by the blood of thy Testament hast sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit."³

When the time has come, the Son of God made man fulfils his engagement, realizes what had been pre-figured, and accomplishes what had been foretold of himself. Scarcely has he appeared among men, when he yields the first fruits of his blood under the knife of circumcision, and binds himself anew to shed every drop of it for mankind.

When about to deliver himself to his enemies, he gives his blood, under the sacramental species, to his apostles who are seated at table with him, and tells them, as he presents the chalice which he has consecrated: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins."⁴ He then repairs to the Garden of Olives, and falling into an agony, he sweats drops of

¹Exod. xii. 13.

²Isai. lxiii. 1, 2.

³Zach. ix. 11.

⁴Matt. xxvi. 27, 28.

blood, which penetrates his clothes and bedews the ground. Thus it is that the High Priest of the New Law enters into the sanctuary, not, like the high-priests of old, with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own blood.¹

Soon Judas delivers up the innocent blood which he has sold for thirty pieces, and Jesus is in the power of the Jews who, in their turn, deliver him to Pilate. In the pretorium, the divine Victim pours forth his blood through the wounds made by the cruel scourges, and the sharp crown of thorns.

Let us accompany him to Calvary. We can trace his footprints, marked as they are with the blood which has fallen to the ground and is contemptuously trampled upon by the feet of the deicidal populace. With him let us hasten to the summit of the mountain, the place of the bloody sacrifice. The holy Victim is soon stretched on the altar; the veins of his hands and feet are burst by horrible blows, which cause the divine blood to gush forth, dyeing the hands and the feet of the executioners. The cross is then raised, and is quickly purpled by the blood of Jesus, which continues to flow, first in streams, then gradually diminishing in volume, until it trickles down drop by drop. And it is falling before the eyes of Mary, his Mother. O tender Mother! what anguish wrings thy heart at sight of that blood formed of thy substance! No words of man can attempt to describe thy feelings. Finally, let us behold the soldier who, with a thrust of his lance, pierces the side and the heart of Jesus, and thus drains the last drop of the Redeemer's blood.

The divine blood that was shed on Calvary still flows

¹Heb. ix. 12.

mystically on our altars, where it is really and substantially present. Everywhere and unceasingly it pleads with our heavenly Father, and produces the same effect as on Calvary. O how admirable and how salutary is its influence! But here let us allow the saints and the Church to speak.

"The blood of Christ," says St. Paul, "will cleanse our conscience."¹ We find in Jesus Christ, by his blood, the remission of sins in which redemption consists:² "the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than Abel."³ "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."⁴

The Apostle St. John says: "Jesus hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."⁵ The saints overcame the dragon "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."⁶

"The blood of Jesus Christ," says St. Chrysostom, "drives the devils away from us, and brings to our aid the angels and the Lord of angels. The destroying angel entered not where the blood of the paschal Lamb was sprinkled. What, then, can the angel of darkness do to such as are marked with the blood of the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world?"

"That blood which thou didst shed, O wretched demon," says St. Augustine, "has vanquished thee, and ransomed me. Having drunk of it, I fear no more the malice of thy venom."

"O blood of Jesus Christ!" exclaims St. Bernard, "thou art on the altar a drink, on the cross our ransom, in heaven our defence with God."

¹Heb. ix. 14.²Col. i. 20.³Heb. xii. 24.⁴Rom. v. 9.⁵Apoc. i. 5.⁶*Ibid.* xii. 11.

“Mankind,” says holy Church, “expected but a dread misfortune, the fruit of the first Adam’s crime; but the new Adam, by his innocence and his love, has restored us to life. By his blood he has purchased for us an eternal redemption. The Father, disarmed, can no longer refuse pardon: and whosoever washes his defilement in that divine blood, acquires splendor and beauty, like unto that of the angels and fit to please the King of kings.”¹

APPLICATION

While entertaining ourselves with these holy and salutary thoughts, let us adore the divine Blood shed for our salvation; let us profoundly venerate it in union with Mary adoring it on Calvary. Let us weep over our sins which rendered its effusion necessary. Let us remember that it is on account of our iniquities that Jesus Christ was crucified, and shed every drop of his blood.

Let us love our generous Redeemer; let us bless him for having made himself a victim in our place. “We venerate the precious blood that he sheds for our salvation: shall we refuse to mingle with it, at least, tears of gratitude?”¹

Let us pray, in all confidence, to God the Father; for, through the blood of Jesus Christ, we have access to his heart: the blood of the new Abel indeed ascends to heaven, but it is to sue for mercy. Let us unite our prayer with the voice of its pleading, and we may be sure that we shall be heard.

¹Office of the Precious Blood.

Let us prepare well for holy Communion, for there the blood of Jesus is given us as the food of our souls. Let us receive it with pure and fervent hearts, that the saying of the divine Master may be accomplished in us: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day;"¹ and that, admitted to share in his glory, we may say to him with the saints: "Lord, thou hast redeemed us in thy blood, and hast made us to our God a kingdom."²

PRAYER

O Jesus, deign, we beseech thee, to assist thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.³ "And thou, O almighty Father, be propitious unto us. Thou hast redeemed us by the blood of thine only Son; thou wilt reign with us by the grace of the holy Spirit. Vouchsafe to complete thy gifts by crowning us in heaven."

Résumé, page 128.

To-day we commemorate the shedding of the precious blood,

1. Consented to from the beginning by the Word.
2. Prefigured by that of the blood of victims; announced by the prophets.
3. Begun at the circumcision of Jesus Christ.
4. Continued during the passion, consummated on the cross.
5. Mystically and unceasingly reproduced on all the altars of the Christian world.
6. Satisfying divine justice for us, and restoring our right to heaven.

¹John vi. 55.

²Apoc. v. 9, 10.

³Hymn *Te Deum*.

—How can we dwell on these thoughts without comprehending that we ought,

1. To adore the precious blood shed for our salvation ;
2. To weep for our sins, which made that shedding necessary ;
3. To love Jesus Christ, who became a victim for us ;
4. To pray with all confidences to God the Father, through his blood ;
5. To prepare ourselves well for holy Communion, in which that blood is our nourishment, and becomes for us a principle of eternal life ?

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION

SEPTEMBER 14—EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

God forbid that I should glory, but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Gal. vi. 14.

CONSIDERATION

Before the death of Jesus Christ, the cross was an instrument of sorrow and shame,—an infamous gibbet the very sight of which was dreaded. Indeed, nothing was considered more vile or contemptible than the cross. Now it is an object of profound veneration. People everywhere celebrate its greatness, singing with the Church: “The standard of the eternal Monarch is displayed. On this wood, the Author of life received death, and by his death gave us life. O precious tree, resplendent with glory, chosen to touch the sacred members of the Savior, and stained with his adorable blood!”¹ “O cross more brilliant than all the stars, celebrated throughout all the earth, worthy of all honor from men, holier than all else that is holy, and alone worthy of bearing the world’s ransom! O wood worthy of love, that didst receive a Burden so precious, save the people assembled on this day to sing thy praises!”²

It has become the most glorious of all standards, the

¹Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

²Office of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

special sign of honor. It is now revered even more than it was once despised. Of how many diadems is it not the principal ornament? What homage has been rendered to it in the past and is still rendered to it to-day! Let us call to mind the veneration in which it was held by the Emperor Heraclius, and which the Church commemorates by the feast of this day.

But why is the destiny of the cross so changed? It is because the Son of God touched it with his hands, carried it on his shoulder, suffered upon it his last torments and purpled it with his blood. From that day it has held every title to the veneration of men and angels.

The cross is the altar of the great sacrifice that was offered for the reconciliation of man with God; on it the divine Lamb, whose death is our redemption and our life, was immolated; on it he who is both Priest and Victim, shed his blood for the glory of God his Father and the remission of our sins.

The cross is the wood, announced by the prophet, by which justice cometh.¹ It is the balance whereon the divine body which is the world's ransom, far outweighed the spoils of hell.²

The cross is the tree that has repaired all the ills of which the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the source. Through the latter, man was made the slave of pride, covetousness, and sensuality, and became subject to death of soul and body; through the former, he immolates the triple concupiscence and recovers the life that was lost.

The cross is the triumphal chariot of our divine Savior; it was from it that he vanquished the devil, and

¹Wisd. xiv. 7.

²Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

destroyed the empire of darkness. Hence does the Church say: "Publish amongst the nations that the Lord triumphs by the wood."¹ "Behold the cross of the Lord: fly, hostile bands!"²

The cross is a beacon reminding those who sail on the sea of this world, of him who is the true Light. It is the throne of the new Solomon, whence he rules over all the earth, and teaches nations true wisdom.

Jesus Christ humbled himself, and therefore did his Father exalt him,³ give him all nations as an inheritance,⁴ and make him King over all.⁵ But, it is on the cross that Christ exercises his dominion; "He rules by the wood,"⁶ says the Church, recalling the words of David.

The cross is the standard of the supreme Monarch, planted in the sight of all men, around which rally the elect. Before it all other standards shall be lowered. It alone shall survive the destruction of the world, and be seen radiant in the heavens by all generations of men. It is the sign of the Son of Man,⁷ which at the last day, shall fill the wicked with terror, whilst it shall be the joy and the consolation of the just.

The cross, says St. Augustine, is not only the sacred altar on which Jesus was immolated; it is the pulpit from which he instructs us. From it he preaches most eloquently, lessons of humility, meekness, patience, pardon of our enemies, self-denial, devotion, constancy,—in a word, all virtues, for on the cross he practises them

¹Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

Holy Cross.

³Phil. ii. 8.

⁴Ps. ii. 8.

⁵*Ibid.* 9.

⁶Hymn, *Vexilla Regis*.

⁷Matt. xxiv. 30.

all in their most sublime perfection. From it he tells us: "You call me Master and Lord; for I have given you an example,"¹—will you refuse to follow it, you who are my disciples?

"From the cross," says St. Leo, "the Savior rebukes the effeminacy of worldlings by his sufferings; their inordinate love of riches, by his destitution; their pomp and their pride, by his humility." Thence he beautifies poverty, humiliations, and tears; he is there the pattern shown us on the mountain,² to which we must be conformed. Happy are they who hear and practise these divine lessons, and who can say with the Apostle that they glory only in the cross of Christ crucified.³

The cross is the bond of union between heaven and earth: by it the divine mercy comes to us; by it we go to God. Jesus on the cross draws souls to himself and raises them to his Father, according to his promise: "When I shall be lifted up from earth, I will draw all things to myself."⁴

The cross is the monument of Christ's love for men: and how grandly it testifies to his charity! It tells us that he so loved us as to "be made a curse for us,"⁵ to suffer every pain, to shed all his blood, and to give his life for our salvation. It reminds us that his love was stronger than death; that when his heart had ceased to beat, it was still so consumed with love for us, as to give us a pledge thereof, by pouring forth through its gaping wound the last drops of redeeming blood.

The cross is the symbol of our belief, the distinctive sign of Christians, the foundation of our hope, the fuel

¹John xiii. 13, 15.

²Exod. xxv. 40.

³Gal. vi. 14.

⁴John xii. 32.

⁵Gal. iii. 13.

of our charity, the source of the greatest good! We must then bless, exalt, and glorify it, and make known to men this admirable invention of God's justice and mercy.

APPLICATION

Let us render due worship to the cross. Let us salute it with respect. Let us help to procure for it both honor and respect, as indeed our profession demands. Let us make the sign of the cross with faith and devotion: let us arm ourselves with it in temptation, remembering that by this sign we conquer the enemy of our salvation. Let us carry the crucifix religiously about us. After the example of the saints, let us press it to our hearts, kiss it with affection, contemplate it with piety, meditate on the facts which it recalls, and nourish therewith both mind and heart.

Let us revive our love for Jesus Christ and our gratitude to him. The cross tells us how he has loved us: should it not tell us how we ought to love him and devote ourselves to his glory?

Let us beg of Jesus crucified the grace to honor his holy cross by our love and esteem for the spiritual cross which he has destined for us. Let us reflect that the latter—how repugnant soever it may be to our nature—is a proof of divine goodness, a testimonial of the love of Jesus for us, an indication of the way by which he wishes to lead us to heaven.

Let us accept it, therefore, with resignation, and say with all the saints: "O Cross, thou art my hope, my consolation, and my joy! Be my bed of rest. On thee I wish to live and die!"

PRAYER

Divine Savior, who callest me to imitate thee and to share in the glory which thou hast acquired by thy labors and sufferings, give me patience in the troubles and adversities of life. Grant that, contemplating the crucifix, I may attach myself to the cross with thee, there to remain until I shall be admitted to thy eternal kingdom.

Résumé, page 142.

From an instrument of opprobrium, the cross has become a monument of glory, because :

1. Jesus Christ touched it, and sanctified it with his blood.

2. It is the altar of the great sacrifice.

3. It is the throne of the new Solomon, the chair of supreme Wisdom, the link between heaven and earth.

4. It proclaims everywhere the immense love of Jesus Christ for us.

5. It is the symbol of our faith, the motive of our hope, the nourishment of our charity.

—Let us then venerate the cross and, to that end,

1. Honor it wherever we meet it.

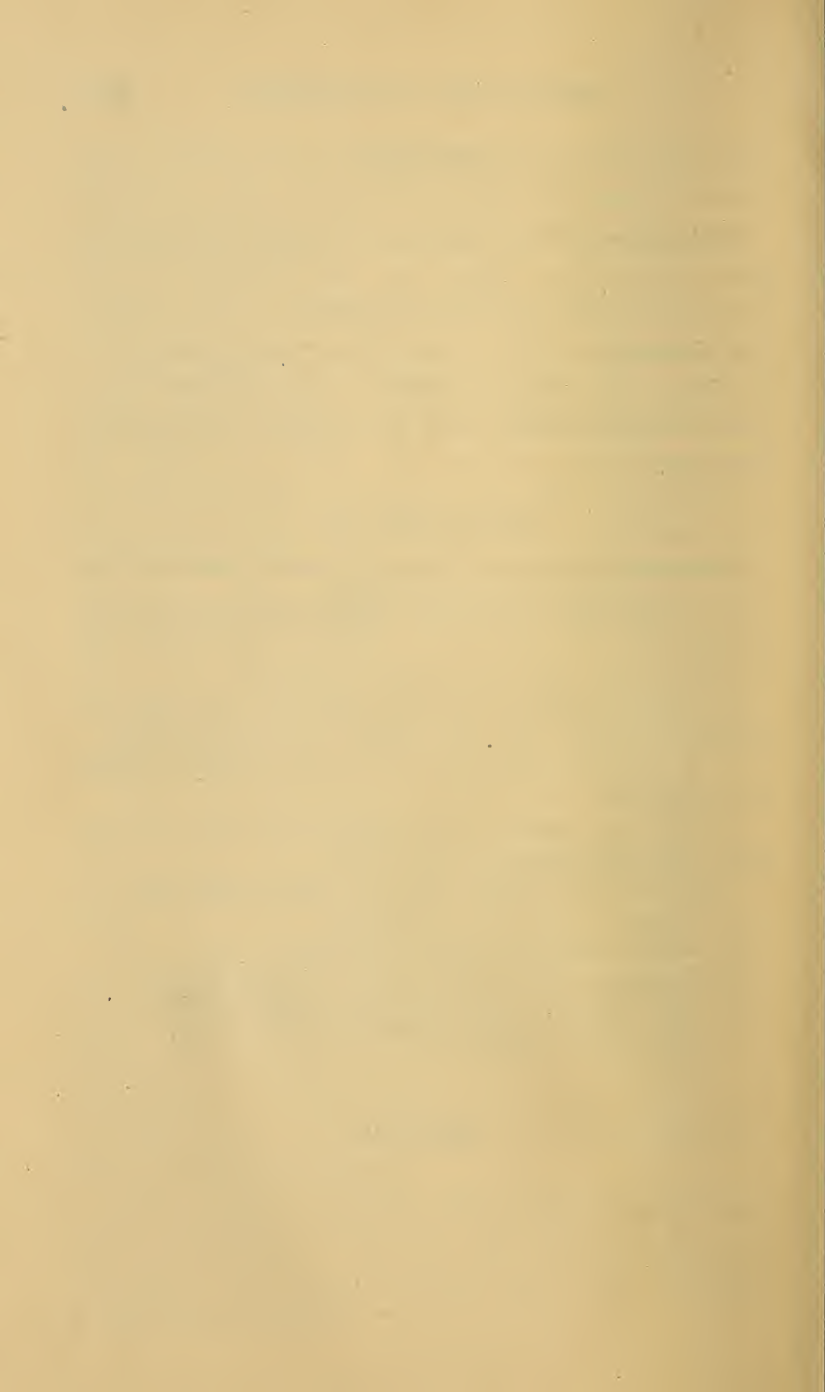
2. Always carry the crucifix about us.

3. Meditate on the facts of which it reminds us.

4. Love with our whole heart our crucified Lord.

5. Ask him for humility and love of the cross.

THE END



MAR 4 1910

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2005

Preservation Technologies

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

BT
430

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

MAR 8 1911

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 227 874 1